

CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

W R I T I N G S

OF THE MOST CELEBRATED

ORIGINAL GENIUSES IN POETRY.

BEING

A S E Q U E L

TO THE

ESSAY ON ORIGINAL GENIUS.

BY W. DUFF, A. M.

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CRITIC OF INVENTIONS

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TO THE

REAR OF ORIGINAL

BY W. D. B. A. M.



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following observations on the Genius and writings of some of the most eminent Poets, both ancient and modern, the reader will perceive to be the sequel of the essay on Original Genius, published some time ago. The author, deeply sensible, of his obligations to the candour of several persons of unquestionable judgment and taste, for the favourable opinion they were pleased to entertain of that performance, presumes to hope for the continuance of the same benevolent disposition; and that they will read this work with the same indulgent eye with which they perused the first.

As it may possibly be imagined by some persons that the province the author has chosen for himself is already in a great measure at least pre-occupied by others, since the writings of the most celebrated Poets of every age have been criticized, and some of those writings by authors of great eminence in the sphere of criticism, he would beg leave to observe, in favour of the utility of the present design, that though many of the most distinguished beauties of Poetry

have in one form or another been pointed out and illustrated by preceding writers, yet there is still scope for a diversity of criticism, both in the arrangement of the plan, in the selection of the passages, and in the manner of their illustration. In these particulars he hopes there will be found as much novelty at least, as to keep the attention from flagging in the course of the perusal; and if most of the passages quoted in the following little dissertations (which are intended to give a general idea of the merit of the most distinguished Original Geniuses in Poetry, under the different heads laid down, and agreeable to the plan prescribed in the former work, rather than to present a full display of their different characters) should happen to be familiar, as they probably will be to those who are conversant with the highest kind of Poetical productions; yet as he imagines they will be apposite and striking examples of the different qualities as specimens of which they are adduced, and as the illustrations of those passages are sufficiently different from the illustrations of other writers, he does not question his being

ing excused by the reader of taste for allowing them a place in the following work.

It is very probable that some of his readers may be disappointed, and perhaps others displeased, at finding their favourite authors over looked, in an attempt to do justice to the merit of some of the most distinguished Original Geniuses in Poetry. To this charge the author can only reply, that as he thought the examples he had adduced were sufficient to confirm the theory advanced in the preceding work, so having determined to comprise his observations on those writers within the compass of one volume, he was under a necessity of making a selection which could not fail to exclude several authors of real eminence from a place in the subsequent work. This restriction in the plan must be his apology for suppressing the reflections on the Oratorical Genius of Bossuet and Saurin, which he had promised in the former work.

The author thinks it his duty to embrace this opportunity of correcting a mistake, into which he had been unwarily led in the former work, by a too implicit reliance on the information of a public news paper, in
which

which the passage in page 244 of that work was said to have been delivered in the British Senate, and was ascribed to a late illustrious commoner. He has now the best authority to contradict that information; and has reason to believe that the passage in question was the production of a young gentleman in Edinburgh, who, it seems, was desirous of trying his talents in an imitation of the greatest orator of the age. Though the gentleman appears to the author to have succeeded happily enough in the imitation he intended, and though the fictitious extract he has presented us with affords a favourable presage of the future efforts of his Genius, yet this method of exercising his ingenuity, by the freedom he has taken with a name of such reputation, cannot, he is afraid, be entirely vindicated.

C O N-

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CRITICAL

[2]

Critical Observations, &c.

B O O K I.

**Of some of the most distinguished Original
Geniuses in Poetry:**

S E C T. I.

O F H O M E R.

HAVING considered the principal ingredients and characters of original poetic Genius at sufficient length in a preceding work, we propose in some following sections of this, to exemplify the remarks we have therein made on the above-mentioned subject, and to shew, that the distinguishing properties of original Genius in poetry, are found in the compositions of the

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most

most eminent poets, both ancient and modern. In the execution of this attempt, the reader will easily perceive, that it is not our intention to enter into a minute examination of all the beauties that are to be found in the works of those immortal authors, a design far beyond the limits of our plan; but to give a general, and at the same time as comprehensive a view as we are able of their different characters, to present some of their distinguishing features, and to point out those strokes of originality that may occasionally occur in our review of their writings, which may indicate the kind and degree of Genius peculiar to each of them.

We know not whether it will be reckoned too bold an assertion, to affirm, that in a period of about six thousand years, that is from the creation of the world to this day, there have arisen only three complete *original Geniuses* in the art of *Poetry*, whose compositions have descended to our times; and these are Homer, Ossian,
and

and Shakespeare. As this position will appear problematical to some persons, and perhaps chimerical to others, we shall endeavour to support it by some remarks on the Genius and writings of those great Authors, delivered in the order pointed out in the third section of the second book of the Essay on Original Genius; after which, we shall take a view of the merit of some other distinguished Poets, though inferior in respect of originality to those above-mentioned.

Homer being prior in time to the other two, claims our first attention. This divine Poet lived in a very remote æra of the world, among a people, as yet but little civilized, and among whom the arts and sciences, which in succeeding ages were so much advanced, had as yet made small progress. Being the most ancient uninspired writer we have, he had no model that we know of, on which he could form himself, except that of nature, which lay open to his view. This model he studied with attention, and copied with success. The Iliad and Odyssey,

considered all together, are unquestionably the noblest monuments of human Genius, and have been handed down with the justest admiration through every age. Let us consider, how far, the characteristics of *original* poetic Genius, already enumerated and explained, are found in these compositions, and how far the very original Genius of Homer hath discovered itself in the manner, which we affirmed to be the most natural and the most usual.

It will be remembered, that we considered the talent of invention in general, as one universal and distinguishing characteristic of *original Genius* in Poetry, of which talent we reckoned four distinct species; the *invention* of incidents, of characters, of imagery, and of *sentiment*. It will be farther remembered, that we pointed out *vivid and picturesque description*, as another criterion of the same quality, that we observed *irregular greatness, wildness and enthusiasm* of imagination to be its invariable attendants; and lastly, that it would constantly display its various

various powers, in allegories, in visions, or in the creation and exhibition of ideal characters, especially of the supernatural kind, to which both its abilities and biafs are peculiarly suited. If there is any one quality in which Homer excelled all mankind, it is in the *invention of incidents*. In others, and those too of a distinguishing nature, he had his rivals and his equals, as will afterwards be shewn; in this we think he had none. In order to give an air of dignity and importance to the fable of the Iliad, he has construed it in such a manner, as to interest the gods, not only in the general catastrophe, but in every particular incident that might either hasten or retard it. It is well invented, to make the calamities which Agamemnon and the Greeks suffered, the effect of Thetis' importunate addresses to Jupiter; in which she implores vengeance on the Græcian army, that their leader might be sensible of his injustice to her son Achilles, in depriving him of his fair captive, by feeling the want of his assistance

against the Trojans. The deluding phantom sent by Jupiter to the tent of Atrides, in order to persuade that monarch to give battle to the enemy, deceiving him with the vain hope of ending all their labours and dangers by one effort, which should accomplish the entire destruction of Troy, is a beautiful machine and introduced with great propriety. The interposition of Venus to rescue her son from the danger of impending death from the hand of Diomed, in the fifth book, is judiciously invented. The Episode of Glaucus and Diomed, in the sixth book, makes an agreeable pause in the action, and raises our admiration of the hospitality and generosity of those ancient heroes; but that of Hector and Andromache in the same book, is of all others the most deeply interesting. This episode will be afterwards taken notice of, when we come to consider Homer's talent in exciting the passions; we mention it only at present as a finely imagined incident. We may further observe, that the stratagem of
Juno's

Juno's borrowing the girdle of Venus, in order to render herself amiable in the eyes of Jupiter, and her contrivance of lulling him asleep, that Neptune during that interval might assist the Greeks, are exquisite fictions, and instances of a most creative imagination. The embassy to Achilles, and the inflexibility of that hero, are natural and necessary parts of the narration; and the first abatement of his rigid obstinacy, which is his allowing Patroclus to go to the assistance of the Græcian army clad in his armour, is judiciously attributed to the influence of Patroclus himself, who had importunately intreated this favour. The final extinction of Achilles' resentment against Agamemnon, is very naturally effected by the death of Patroclus, by which event alone, an entire reconciliation could have been effected consistently with his unrelenting character. These are a few of those beautiful and well-invented incidents, with which the fable of the Iliad is filled up. That of the Odyssey, abounds likewise with

a great variety of incidents equally beautiful, though of a different kind, indicating the astonishing wildness and exuberance of Homer's imagination. The adventures of Ulysses among the Cicons, the Lotophagi and the Cyclops; his interview with Æolus, the calamities which happened to him and his companions on the coast of the Læstrigons, their arrival in the island of Circe, the transformation of his companions, the method by which Ulysses defeated the enchantments of this goddess, and restored his friends to their former shape; his descent into hell, the account he gives of the mansions of the dead, his marvellous escape from the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis, whose nature and qualities are described in the highest spirit of poetry; his shipwreck on the coast of Calypso, his entertainment by that goddess, and his departure from her island, his hospitable reception at the Thracian court, his arrival after all his labours and dangers in his own kingdom, his discovery to Eumæus, to Telemachus, and

last

last of all to Penelope, are highly pleasing, as well as most surprizing fictions; and pregnant instances of the most luxuriant and creative genius.

A great part of the mythology of Homer was no doubt the mythology of his country; but the use he has made of it, is altogether his own. He has employed his celestial machinery in general with admirable art and judgment; yet in some instances, he may be thought to have transgressed a rule delivered many centuries after his time,

Nec Deus interfit

Nisi dignus vindice nodus inciderit.

It is certain, that Homer's gods are introduced upon the stage more frequently than is necessary; that they are upon some occasions made to act a part, which might have been more properly performed without their interposition; and that sometimes they are employed in offices too frivolous, and below the dignity of their godships. Thus, though we allow the principal heroes to be
the

the favourites and the care of some guardian deity, who may protect them in cases of imminent danger, and rescue them from instant fate, when it is necessary their lives should be lengthened out, yet we cannot see occasion for Minerva's almost constant attendance on the son of Tydeus, and her assisting him in those combats, where his own valour would have gained him the victory. By this unseasonably display of unnecessary aid, we have no means left us of distinguishing the exploits of the hero from the actions of the goddess. We observed likewise that Homer's gods sometimes act a part which might be more properly performed without them. Can any one suppose, that Hector had occasion for the assistance of Apollo, to enable him to kill Patroclus? But Homer, seems to have envied him the honour of his entire conquest. He must first be disarmed by the god, then wounded by Euphorbus, and Hector has the last mean part assigned him, of killing this hero outright; though we are persuaded, most people will be of opinion

opinion that the Trojan chief, was a match for Patroclus, clad as he was in the armour of Achilles. To exemplify the last observation, that the deities in the Iliad, are sometimes employed in offices below their dignity, must it not be allowed, that to become the charioteer of Diomed, was no post of honour for Minerva, but that by assuming the reins and plying the lash, she rather degrades her divinity?

We shall farther take the liberty to observe, that notwithstanding the credulity of the Greeks, and the extensive licence of fiction which their mythology allowed, of which licence Homer has greatly availed himself, there are some incidents both in the Iliad and Odysssey rather too marvellous even for the Poet's own age, and some of them, have too ludicrous an air to have place in an epic poem. What, for instance, shall we say of the miraculous gift of speech conferred on the horses of Achilles, that they might vindicate themselves from the unjust charge brought against them by their master,

master, of failing in their duty to Patroclus, when he supposed their fleetness might have preserved him. Perhaps the undistinguishing admirers of Homer will satisfy themselves by resolving the whole into a supernatural incident, and justify it by a miracle of a similar nature recorded in the sacred writings; in which we are told, that Balaam's ass, miraculously endued with man's voice, reprov'd the madness of the Prophet *. But the causes of this very unusual phænomenon, were by no means similar, nor can we admit it as a sufficient reason, in the former case, for breaking through the order of nature, and encroaching upon the prerogative of the human species, that those generous steeds, though of heavenly extraction, might have an opportunity of asserting their fidelity to the deceased friend of their master. We shall mention two other incidents which appear somewhat ludicrous, as well as improbable;

* Numb. xxii. 28. 2 Pet. ii. 16.

the one we find in the twenty-first book of the Iliad, where the river Scamander attacks Achilles, pursues, and threatens to overwhelm him with all his waves; till Vulcan, at the instigation of Juno, comes down from heaven, to chastise the insolence of Scamander, whose waters he scorches and dries up with fire. The other we meet with in the tenth book of the Odyssey, where Æolus gives Ulysses the adverse winds, shut up in a bag, which being loosed by the ignorance or imprudence of his companions, the winds rush forth and raise a most dreadful tempest. These extravagant fictions however, are instances of that exuberance, wildness and irregularity of imagination, which distinguish every great genius. We may bestow the same epithet upon them, which the ancient fathers of the Christian church bestowed upon the virtues of the heathens; we may call them the "*splendida peccata*" of Homer. Great liberties in composition, are sometimes taken by men of exalted
genius,

genius, and must be allowed to them. It is their singular privilege upon certain occasions, to depart from, and to transgress those rules, which will be for ever binding on persons of ordinary abilities not only with impunity, but with applause.

Great wits may sometimes gloriously offend,
And rise to faults true critics dare not mend;
From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part,
And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art.

POPE.

How far Homer's faults are of this kind, we shall not here enquire; but only observe, that as there is scarce any human composition of the length of the Iliad or the Odyssey, equally faultless; so most of the blemishes to be found in them, may be derived from the exuberance of an exhaustless imagination, and may be compared to the apostate angels in Milton, who though with "faded splendor wan," still exhibited the "excess of glory obscured."

Thus much with regard to Homer's *invention of incidents*; let us now consider his talent

talent in the second species of *invention* we mentioned, which was that of *characters*.

We cannot doubt that the characters as well as incidents, both in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, are chiefly the creatures of his own imagination *. His acquaintance, with the manners of the Græcian and Trojan heroes, in so early an age, and at so considerable a distance of time, must have been

* The author of the *Epigoniad*, says, if I rightly remember, in his preface to that poem, that he could as soon believe that Prometheus had made a man of clay, as that Homer had invented all the incidents in the *Iliad*. For my own part, though I do not suppose that the entire fable of the *Iliad* is fictitious, as we have reason to believe, that the Greeks warred with the Trojans some hundreds of years before Homer's time (however unsupported the particulars may be by authentic history) yet on the other hand I am persuaded, that by far the greatest part of the incidents both in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are the invention of the Poet; and I have not the least doubt that the imagination of Homer could have supplied them all, or at least others equally proper, and that it would have supplied him with such, if he had not found the ground-work of the *Iliad* in the traditionary

very imperfect. He has, however, admirably supplied the defects of history by the creative power of his own fancy. Achilles still appears brave, but furious and implacable; Ajax is characterized by his gigantic size and brute strength, but is destitute of those qualities which can employ them to the best advantage. Diomed is generous and brave; and Nestor is a sage talkative old man; but the most complete character in the whole Iliad is that of Hector; and we may appeal to every impartial reader, whether his wishes do not accompany the Trojan chief through all the scenes of death? and whether he is not more interested in his fate, than in that of any other hero of the poem? Our admiration

tionary records of his own country, and already established in general credit, which might reasonably determine him to prefer it to another altogether his own invention. It is not easy therefore to conjecture the cause of Mr Wilkie's incredulity, though in a person destitute of imagination, I should neither be surprised nor at a loss to account for it.

and

and concern, may in this case, be said to be wrong placed, and contrary to the intention of the author, who being himself a Greek, must naturally have been desirous to prepossess his readers in favour of his principal hero, and the Græcian army; but in this he has not succeeded, for the Trojan prince carries our hearts and affections along with him. In order to divert the stream of our affections into the right channel, the character of Hector should have been rendered less amiable, or that of Achilles more agreeable. The first possibly might have been done, the latter could not have been affected without altering the whole plan of the poem. It was absolutely necessary that Achilles should be passionate, fierce, and unrelenting; otherwise the poet could never have shewn in such a striking light the mischievous consequences of discord among so many Græcian princes, and the happy effects of their unanimity. In justice to Homer, we may also observe, that a regard to historical, or traditionary evi-

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dence,

dence, has probably obliged him to draw the character of Hector as he has done; for we may readily suppose that if he could have altered it for the worse, without violating probability, his judgment would have dictated that alteration. It must be confessed to be a defect in the plan, that the character of the principal hero should be that of a fierce unrelenting ruffian, while the character of his antagonist is that of a brave and generous warrior, distinguished for his tenderness as well as for his valour. But this seems to have been an unavoidable defect, and not justly chargeable on Homer. There is however one impropriety in the character of Hector, which must be charged on the Poet alone; I mean the spectacle he exhibits of this great warrior flying from Achilles, and pursued by him round the walls of Troy, like a coward and a fugitive; a very unseemly sight, a behaviour very unbecoming to brave a man, and utterly inconsistent with his whole character. This impropriety can only be accounted

counted for from the partiality of the poet, who in this instance was desirous of aggrandizing his hero at the expence of his antagonist; though this doubtless might have been sufficiently done, without such a flagrant violation of manners: and if Hector's death was due to "stern Pallas and Pelides' ire," he ought unquestionably to have died as he lived, like a patriot and a hero.

That consistency of character which is so necessary to the perfection of an epic poem, and which Homer has so notoriously violated in the Iliad in the above instance, he has uniformly preserved in the Odyssey, where his genius was no way warped by an interfering partiality to his country. The character of Ulysses, the principal hero, is strongly marked, and justly delineated. He is constantly distinguished by the most profound wisdom, by the most consummate prudence, by an intrepid valour, by an admirable dexterity of address, by a happy fertility of invention, discovered in supply-

ing expedients in the most critical and dangerous conjunctures, and above all, by a supreme unextinguished love of his country. Telemachus is a brave, ardent and enterprising youth, particularly characterized by his filial affection. The character of Alcinous is highly respectable, and perfectly amiable. He is celebrated for the benevolence and hospitality of his disposition. He appears to be the refuge of the unhappy, the father of his people, and the friend of strangers. The good old shepherd Eumæus discovers in the whole of his behaviour a certain venerable simplicity of manners, an inviolable fidelity to the interests of his master, and an unfeigned concern for the misfortunes of his family. We can only touch upon the discriminating features of the principal characters; those who desire to see them fully displayed, must consult the divine poem in which they are exhibited.

As it may be proper however in this place to give the reader some idea of Homer's
method

method of unfolding his characters, I shall quote two or three passages which, I think, give us a full and distinct view of the character he intends to represent. Ulysses having, after a variety of toils and dangers, arrived at the court of Alcinous, the Poet, in order to give us an idea of the benignity of this amiable monarch, represents him as calling a council of his nobles, in order to deliberate concerning the method of transporting the wandering hero to his native country. The king, after recommending this affair to their consideration, adds,

Μηδ' εἰ μεσσηγυς γέ κακόν καὶ πῆμα παθῆι

Πρὶν γέ τοι ὅς γαίης ἐπιβήμεναι·

Odyss. lib. 7. l. 195.

Meantime, nor harm, nor anguish, let him bear,

This interval heaven trusts him to our care,

But to his native land our charge resign'd,

Heaven's his life to come, and all the woes behind.

POPE, b. vii. l. 256.

The prince subjoins a fine moral reflection, which shews him to have been possessed of

a contemplative as well as of a sympathizing disposition, and that, though seated on a throne, he had a deep sense of the miseries of human life.

—εἴθ' αὖ δ' ἐπειτα

Πείσεται ἄσσα οἱ αἶσα κατακλῶθες τε βαρεῖαι

Γεινομένα νητάντο λίγῳ ὅτε μιν τέκε μήτηρ.

ibid. l. 196.

Then must he suffer what the fates ordain;
For fate has wove the thread of life with pain,
And twins, even from the birth, are misery and man.

l. 262.

Alcinous having ordered a variety of rich presents to be put up for his guest, and provided every thing for ensuring his safe and honourable return, appears studious in the mean-time of entertaining him agreeably during his stay; for which purpose he had called upon the poet Demodocus to sooth his grief with the melody of song. But observing that the subject (which was the war of Troy) and the song affected his guest too deeply, with a humanity and delicacy

licacy of soul truly amiable, he desires the bard to cease his heart-thrilling strains.

Διμυροσχος δ' ἤδη χεῖρα φορμύσῃ λήγειν —

Εξ ἔδ' ὀρπεόμεν τε καὶ ὠρρα δ' ἰος αἰσδ' ας,

Εκ τῷδ' ἔπα παυσάτ ὕψυροιο γόοιο

Ο ξεινος. Odyss. lib. viii. l. 537.

O cease to sing,

Dumb be thy voice, and mute the tuneful string :

To every note his tears responsive flow,

And his great heart heaves with tumultuous woe ;

Thy lay too deeply moyes.

B. viii. l. 585.

These are but a few strokes, but they give us the resemblance complete. The condescending benignity, and the princely generosity of Alcinous, accompanied with a sympathetic feeling of human misery, are all suited, and strongly expressed in the draught.

The third species of *invention*, in which we shewed *original* poetic Genius would excel, was that of *imagery*.

Homer has raised many of his similitudes upon the grandest, the most awful, and the

most beautiful objects in nature. The comparison of Achilles blazing in his armour, as he is first discovered by Priam scouring the field, to the dog-star, is unspeakably noble and sublime.

Τὸν δ' ὁ γέρον Πριάμος πρῶτος ἰδὲν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν
 Παμφαίνονθ' ὥς ἀστὲρ ἐπισσυσμινον πεδίοιο,
 Οὐδ' ἴα τ' ὅπως εἴσιν ἀριζήλοισι δὲ οἱ αὐγαί
 Φαίνονται πολλοῖσι μετ' ἀστράσι νυκτὸς ἀμολγῶ·
 Οἱ τε κυν' Ὀρίωνος ἐπικλήσιν καλέουσι·
 Λάμπροτατος μὲν ὄγ' ἐστὶ, κακὸν δὲ τὸ σῆμα τέτυκται,
 Καὶ τὸ φέρει πολλὸν πυρετὸν δαίλοισι βροτοῖσιν·
 Ὡς τε χαλκὸς ἐλαμπὲς περὶ στήθεσσι θεῶντος.

Il. lib. xxii. l. 25.

Him, as he blazing shot across the field,
 The careful eyes of Priam first beheld.
 Not half so dreadful rises to the fight,
 Through the thick gloom of some tempestuous night,
 Orion's dog (the year when autumn weighs)
 And o'er the feebler stars exerts his rays;
 Terrific glory! for his burning breath
 Taints the red air with fevers, plagues, and death.
 So flam'd his fiery mail.

l. 35.

It is impossible to conceive a grander or more apposite image than the above-mentioned

tioned one, in order to give us an idea of the tremendous appearance of Achilles, and of the terror which this appearance struck to the heart of Priam. The new made shield of Achilles makes a very conspicuous figure, and our idea of its magnitude and splendor is heightened by a very noble image,

—τι δ' ἀπαργεὺς σάλας γένετ' αὐτὸς ἥϊον.

lib. xix. l. 374.

And like the moon, the broad refulgent shield
Blaz'd with long rays, and gleam'd athwart the field,
l. 402.

The following image, intended to represent the same object, is likewise truly sublime, and is rendered more particular and picturesque by a beautiful and judicious amplification.

Ὡς δ' ὅταν ἐκ πορτοῖο σάλας ναυτῆσι φανείη
Καιόμενοιο πυρός, τὸ δὲ καίεται ὑψὸς ὀρεσφί
Σαβμῶ ἐν οἰκοῦν' αὐτὸς δ' ἐκ ἀβλαστῆς ἀλλῆλῃ
Πορτον ἐπ' ἐχθρῶντα φίλον ἀπαργεὺς φέρουσιν·
Ὡς ἀπ' Ἀχιλλῆος σαρκεσσεύας αἰθερ' ἔκτανε
Καλὸν δαίδελεν.

ib. l. 375.

So

So to night wand'ring sailors, pale with fears,
 Wide o'er the wat'ry waste a light appears,
 Which on the far seen mountain blazing high,
 Streams from some lonely watch-tower to the sky:
 With mournful eyes they gaze, and gaze again;
 Loud howls the storm, and drives them o'er the main.

Homer seems to have exerted the full force of his genius in the description of the armour of Achilles; and pours forth images with the utmost exuberance. The plume waving over his helmet, which completes the formidable figure of this warlike hero, furnishes the Poet with an image sublime in itself, and admirably calculated to raise our idea of his tremendous appearance.

— περί δὲ τρυφαλείαν αἰεταῖ

Κρατὶ θετο βριαρὴν ἢ δ' αἶψα ὡς ἀπελαμπν

Ἰππυρὶς τρυφαλεῖα περισσεῖοντο δ' εἵθειραι

Χρυσταὶ αὖς Ἡφαίστος ἰεὶ λοφὸν ἀμφὶ θαμνείας. *ib.* l. 380.

Next his high head the helmet grac'd; behind
 The sweepy crest hung floating in the wind:
 Like the red star, that from his flaming hair
 Shakes down diseases, pestilence and war;

So stream'd the golden honours from his head,
Trembled the sparkling plumes, and the loose glories
shed. l. 410.

Mr. Pope, whose translation is altogether so spirited and admirable, hath in this passage even improved upon the original, by adding some circumstances which render the image still more vivid, and more terrific. The "star shaking diseases, pestilence and war from its flaming hair," is certainly a happy improvement of the plumage shining like a star, which is Homer's idea, and prepares us for the wasteful havoc which this dreadful hero was so soon to make among the Trojan troops. We shall add only one other image of a different kind, remarkably beautiful and elegant, and adorned with the richest colours of poetic painting. It is that by which the Poet represents the death of Euphorbus.

Οιον δὲ τρέφει ἔργος ἀνὴρ ἐριθήλης εἰλαιης
Χωρῶ ἐν οἰοπολῶ, ἔθ' ἄλκις ἀναβέβρυχεν ὕδωρ,
Καλόν, τηλεθάον, το δὲ τε πνικαὶ δονέουσι
Παντοίων ἀνέμων, καὶ τε θρυεῖ ἀνθεὶ λευκῶ.

Ελθων

Ελθεν δ' εἰσπίπτεσσι ἀνέμοις, οὐν λασλαπὶ πολλῶν,
 Βοθρεῖ τ' ἐξερρεῖε, καὶ ἐξοταννύσ' ἐπὶ γαίῃ.

Il. lib. xvii. l. 53.

As the young olive, in some sylvan scene,
 Crown'd by fresh fountains with eternal green,
 Lifts the gay head, in snowy flowrets fair,
 And plays and dances to the gentle air;
 When lo! a whirlwind from high heaven invades
 The tender plant, and withers all its shades;
 It lies uprooted from its genial bed,
 A lovely ruin now defaced and dead. l. 57.

It is impossible to select a finer image from all nature, to represent the untimely death of a young warrior celebrated for his beauty, than Homer here uses. We frequently indeed meet with such similes in the writings of modern poets; but the difference is this, that in the latter case they are borrowed; in the former they are entirely original; and in tracing the resemblance we taste the pleasure of novelty and beauty united. We never choose to sip the stream, when we can drink from the fountain. *Juvat integros accedere fontes.* We shall

shall only observe, that though Mr. Pope hath in a great measure preserved the delicacy and beauty of the original in his translation of the above passage, he hath omitted that fine circumstance of a man's rearing the wide-spreading olive with care in a solitary field, a circumstance which renders the image exquisitely tender, and gives it a peculiar propriety.

The last species of *invention*, by which we shewed original poetic Genius to be distinguished, was that of sentiment.

In treating this subject, we observed, that the above-mentioned talent would discover itself in the invention of new and proper sentiments on every subject*; and that in the higher species of poetry it would discover itself in the invention of sublime and pathetic sentiments. As we have shewn that both these, when they happen to be original, are infallible indications of exalted Genius, we shall confirm

* Book ii. sect. 3.

our theory by a few examples from Homer. An example of true sublimity of sentiment occurs in the seventeenth book of the Iliad, which is too generally known and applauded to stand in need of a commentary, but which I cannot however excuse myself from transcribing in this place, as it is so much to our purpose, and can never be too much admired. It is that abrupt and striking prayer of Ajax, when the Grecian army was enveloped in sudden and thick darkness. Thus he addresses the supreme ruler of heaven and earth.

Ζεῦ πατερ, ἀλλὰ σὺ γινῃς ὑπὲρ ἡρώος ὕλας Ἀχαιῶν,
Πομπῶν δ' αἰθρῆν, δὸς δ' ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἰδεῖσθαι
Ἐν δὲ φάτι καὶ οἰεσθόν, ἐπεὶ νῦν τοι ἐπαδεν οὗτος. l. 645.

lord of earth and air,
O king! O father! hear my humble prayer;
Dispell this cloud, the light of heaven restore;
Give me to see, and Ajax asks no more.
If we must perish, we thy will obey;
But let us perish in the face of day. l. 727.

We have another instance of the most exalted sublimity of sentiment in the beginning

ginning of the eighth book of the Iliad. The passage we have in our eye is the speech of Jupiter to the inferior deities. It is indeed long, but the reader of taste will forgive my inserting the whole of it.

Κελεύετε μεν, πάντες τε θεοί, πασαι τε θεαίαι,

Οφρ' εἰπω τα με θυμός, ἐνὶ στήθεσσι κέλευει·

Μητε τις ὦν ὀφείλει θεός τοιχε, μητε τις ἀρσεν

Πειρατὸ διακέρσαι ἐμὸν ἐπὶ· ἀλλ' αἶμα πάντες

Λιγνὴ ὄφρα ταχιστα τελευτήσω ταδε ἔργα.

Ον δ' αὖ ἐγὼν ἀπαρευθε θεῶν ἐβελόρτα νόσῳ

Ἐλθοιτ', ἢ Τρῳέσσιν ἀνηγέμεν, ἢ Δαναοῖσι,

Πληγῆς ἢ κατὰ κόσμον ελευσέται Οὐλύμπονδ'·

Ἡμῖν ἔλων εἴπω ἐς Τάρταρον περσάντα,

Τηλε μάλ', ἢ χι βαθίγον ὑπὸ χθονος ἐς βερεθρον·

Ἐνθα σιδηρεῖαι τε πυλαὶ καὶ χαλκοὶ υἱοὶ,

Τοσσὸν ἐνερθ' αἰδέω, ὅσον οὐρανὸς ἐς' ἄπο γαίης·

Γινώσεται περὶ, ὅσον ἐμὶ θεῶν καρτίφορος ἄχαιῶν.

Εἰδ' ἀγε, πείρησαδε θεοί, ἵνα εἰδέτε πάντας,

Σειρην χρυσόμην ἐξ οὐρανόθεν κρεμάσαντες·

Πάντες δ' ἐξαπείσαδε θεοί, πασαι τε θεαίαι·

Ἀλλ' ἢ κ' ἀν' ἐμεύσασατ' ἐξ οὐρανόθεν πέδιονδ'·

Ζῆν' ὕπατον μῆν' ὦρ', ὅς ἐστι μάλ' ἀπολλὰ καμώτε·

Ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ καὶ ἐγὼ προσέων ἐβέλομαι εἰρύσσαι,

Αὐτῇ κεν γαίῃ, εἰρύσαμ' αὐτῇ τε θάλασσ'·

Ζαχρ' ἡμ' ἄν' ἐντα περ' ἐνὸν Οὐρανῷ
 Διαιμν' τα δ' εἰ' αὐτ' πατρὸς τάχα γέροντο
 Τούτων γὰρ περ' ἐμὲ θεῶν, περ' ἐμ' ἀνθρώπων.

II. lib. viii. l. 5.

Cælestial states, immortal gods! give ear,
 Hear our decree, and rev'rence what ye hear;
 The fix'd decree, which not all heaven can move;
 Thou fate! fulfil it; and, ye powers! approve!
 What god but enters yon forbidden field,
 Who yields assistance, or but wills to yield;
 Back to the skies with shame he shall be driven,
 Gash'd with dishonest wounds, the scorn of heaven:
 Or far, oh far from steep Olympus thrown,
 Low in the dark Tartarian gulph shall groan,
 With burning chains fix'd to the brazen floors,
 And lock'd by hell's inexorable doors;
 As deep beneath th' infernal centre hurl'd,
 As from that centre to th' ethereal world.
 Let him who tempts me, dread these dire abodes;
 And know, th' almighty is the god of gods.
 League all your forces then, ye powers above,
 Join all, and try th' omnipotence of Jove:
 Let down our golden everlasting chain,
 Whose strong embrace, holds heaven, and earth, and
 main:
 Strive all, of mortal and immortal birth,
 To drag, by this, the thunderer down to earth:
 Ye strive in vain! if I but stretch this hand,
 I heave the gods, the ocean and the land;

I fix

I fix the chain to great Olympus height,
 And the vast world hangs trembling in my sight !
 For such I reign, unbounded and above ;
 And such are men, and gods compar'd to Jove. 1. 7.

This whole passage is uncommonly sublime. The solemnity with which Jupiter delivers his dreadful denunciations against the offending deities impresses our minds with a reverential awe ; but we are struck with astonishment at the bold defiance which he gives to the power of all the gods combined together. The idea contained in the two following lines is one of the greatest that can be presented to human imagination.

Αλλ' ὅτε δὴ καὶ ἐγὼ προφρων ἐθελοίμι ἐρυσσαι,
 αὐτῇ κεν γαίῃ ἐρυσαιμ', αὐτῇ τε θαλάσῃ.

— If I but stretch this hand,
 I heave the gods, the ocean and the land.

This amazingly sublime sentiment bears a strong resemblance to a representation which is given us of the power of the true Jehovah in the sacred writings, where he is said to
 “ weigh the hills in scales, and the mountains

D

in

in a ballance, and to take up the isles as a very little thing."

We shall next adduce a few examples of pathetic sentiments from Homer, the invention of which we observed to distinguish every great original Genius. I cannot recollect a more tender scene, in the writings of any author, than that which occurs in the sixth book of the Iliad, betwixt Hector and Andromache; and as it presents us with a fine display of the character of Hector, at the same time that it furnishes an example of pathetic sentiment, I shall beg leave to transcribe the passages from the justly admired Episode in which that display is exhibited. The Trojan prince, just preparing for the battle, and reflecting, perhaps prefiguring, that he should never return from it in life, resolves to take one tender and parting farewell of his wife and son. Thus he expresses his purpose to Helen :

Και γὰρ ἐγὼν οἶκόνδε εἰσεσθῆναι, ὅφρ' αὖτ' ἰδῶμαι

Οἴκεας, ἀλοχὸν τε φίλην, καὶ νύπτιον υἱόν.

Οὐ γὰρ τ' οἶδ' ἂν ἔτι σπιν ὑποτρεπὸς ἴξομαι αὐτῆς,

Ἡ νῦν μ' ὑπὸ χερσὶ θεῶν δαμῶσιν Ἀχαιῶν. l. 365.

Ere

Ere yet I mingle in the direful fray,
 My wife, my infant claim a moment's stay;
 This day, (perhaps the last that sees me here,)
 Demands a parting word, a tender tear:
 This day, some god who hates our Trojan land,
 May vanquish Hector by a Græcian hand. l. 456.

He then goes in search of his beloved princess, and having at last found her, with her young son carried in the arms of his nurse, he at once gives way to the agreeable emotions of conjugal and parental tenderness.

Ἦτοι δ' ἔμεν μνηστὴν ἰδὼν ἐς παῖδα πατὴρ. l. 404.

Silent the warrior smil'd, and pleas'd, resign'd
 To tender passions all his mighty mind. l. 504.

Then follows a very affecting attitude and address, on the part of Andromache.

Ἀνδρὸ μάχῃ δὲ ἐὶ ἀγχι παρὶστάδ' ἀπερυχίσσα,

Ἐντ' ἀεὶ ἐὶ θυχεῖ, ἐπὶς τ' ἐσθλ', ἐκ τ' ὀνομαζέ-

Δαιμονί, φησὶ σε το σὸν μένος, καὶ ἐλπίδας

Παῖδα τε νηπιαχόν, καὶ ἐμ' ἀμμόρον, ἢ ταχὺ χηρὸν

Σεῦ εἶποι· ταχὺ γὰρ σε καὶ ἀκτανύουσιν Ἀχαιοί,

Πάντες ἐφορμηθέντες. l. 405.

His beauteous princess cast a mournful look,

Hung on his hand, and thus dejected spoke;

(Her bosom labour'd with a boding sigh,
 And the big tear stood trembling in her eye.)
 Too daring prince! ah! whither dost thou run?
 Ah too forgetful of thy wife and son!
 And think'st thou not, how wretched we shall be,
 A widow I, an helpless orphan he!
 For sure such courage length of life denies,
 And thou must fall thy virtue's sacrifice.
 Greece in her single heroes strove in vain;
 Now hosts oppose thee, and thou must be slain. l. 506.

Then by a natural and moving effort of passion she implores, that before this fatal event shall happen she may be laid in her clay cold bed.

— 410.

Oh grant me gods! e're Hector meet his doom,
 All I can ask from heaven, an early tomb! l. 518.

After having enumerated the various and dreadful calamities which had befallen her father's family, introduced on purpose to aggravate the misery of her own situation, should she be deprived of her husband as she had been of her father and brothers ;
 she

she adds in an abrupt and beautiful transport of tenderness and affection,

Εκτορ, αταρ συ μοι εσσι πατηρ και ποτνια μητηρ,

Ηδε κατηγνητες, συ δε μοι θαλερος παρακοιτης.

Yet while my Hector still survives, I see
My father, mother, brethren, all in thee.

Alas! my parents, brothers, kindred all,
Once more will perish if my Hector fall. l. 544.

Having given vent to her tender passions, she then advises him to content himself with defending a certain post on the Trojan wall, instead of exposing himself to the fury of his enemies in battle; to which he replies with a spirit every way becoming his heroic character.

Η και εμοι ταδε παντα μελει, γυναι' αλλα μαλ' αιως

Αιδεμαι Τρωας και Τρωαδας ελκισσιπεπλους,

Αικε κακος ως νοσφιν αλυσκαζω πολεμοιο. l. 441.

— That post shall be my care,

Nor that alone, but all the works of war.

How would the sons of Troy in arms renown'd,

And Troy's proud dames whose garments sweep the
ground,

Attain the lustre of my former name,
Should Hector basely quit the field of fame? l. 560.

After going on a little in this strain, he all at once changes his theme, is dissolved into tenderness, and by an affecting turn of passion runs into the melancholy review of the miseries which should befall his wife after his death.

— ὅτε κεν τις Αἰχμῶν χάλκοχιτων
δακρυόεσσαν αἴηται, ελευθερον ἡμᾶρ ἀπυρᾶς·
Και κεν ἐν Ἀργεῖ σὺν αἰ, πρὸς ἀλλῆς ἰσον ὑφαιροῖς·
Και κεν ὕδωρ ποταμῶν Μετὰ δὲ, ὃ Τρεῖς,
Πολλὰ πικρὰ ζόμενι κρατερῇ δ' ἀπικέτετ' ἀναγκῇ·
Και ποτε τις εἴπῃ, ἰδὼν κατὰ δακρυ χέουσαν,
Ἐκτορος ἢ δὲ γυνῆ, ὅς ἀριστεύει μάχεσθαι
Τρωῶν ἵπποδάμων, ὅτε Ἴλιον ἀμφεμάχοντο.
Ὅς ποτε τις εἴπῃ· σοὶ δ' αὖ νεὸν ἐσσεταί αλγος
Χητεῖ τοῖνδ' ἀδελφῶν, ἀμυνεῖν δ' αὖτις ἡμᾶρ. l. 454.

I see thee weeping, trembling, captive led !
In argive looms our battles to design,
And woes of which so large a part was thine !
To bear the victor's hard commands, or bring
The weight of waters from Hyperia's spring.
There while you groan beneath the load of life,
They cry behold the mighty Hector's wife !

Some

Some haughty Greek who lives thy tears to see,
 Embitters all thy woes by naming me.
 The thoughts of glory past and present shame,
 A thousand griefs shall waken at the name! l. 579.

Then follows a most pathetic wish, strongly indicating the ardor and tenderness of his affection, which cannot support the idea of the miseries he had before presaged should happen to his wife.

Αλλα με τεθνηωτα χυτη κατα γαια καλυπτοι,
 Πριν γ' ετι σης τε βους, ου δ' ἄλκῃ μοιο τυθιδαι.
 l. 464.

May I lie cold before that dreadful day,
 Press'd with a load of monumental clay!
 Thy Hoſtor wrapt in everlasting sleep,
 Shall neither hear thee sigh, nor see thee weep. l. 590.

All his comfort under his present direful apprehensions for his Andromache was, that he hoped not to be a spectator of the miseries which he foresaw, but could not prevent. The ardent prayer which he addresses to the heavenly powers, recommending his son to their protection, and imploring them to

crown him with fame superior to his own,
is a strong indication of parental affection,
and proclaims the emotions of a father's
heart.

Ζεῦ, ἄλλοι τε θεοί, δοτε δὴ καὶ τόνδε γενέσθαι
Παιδ' ἔμμον, ὥς καὶ ἐγὼ περ, ἀριστερία Τρῶεσσιν,
Ὡδὲ βίην τ' ἀγαθόν, καὶ ἰλιν ἱεὶ ἀνασσίν.
Καὶ ποτὲ τις εἴπησιν, Πατὴρ δ' ἔγχε πολλὸν ἀμύνων,
Ἐκ πολέμου ἀνιόντα· φέροι δ' ἑτάρα βροτόεντα
Κτενέας δὴσιον ἀνδρα, χάρεϊν δὲ φρένα μητρὸς. . l. 476.

O thou, whose glory fills th' ethereal throne !
And all ye deathless powers protect my son !
Grant him like me to purchase just renown,
To guard the Trojans, to defend the crown,
Against his country's foes the war to wage,
And rise the Hector of the future age !
So when triumphant from successful toils,
Of heroes slain, he bears the reeking spoils,
Whole hosts may hail him with deserv'd acclaim,
And say this chief transcends his father's fame :
While pleas'd amid the general shouts of Troy,
His mother's conscious heart o'erflows with joy. l. 604.

In this whole Episode the character of Hector appears in the most amiable light. When
we read his warlike exploits related in other
parts

parts of the Iliad, we admire the hero; but when we consider the virtues of his heart here delineated; when we contemplate him as a husband and a father, resigning himself for a while to the transports of conjugal and parental affection, we cannot help loving the man. Though we have already swelled out this article considerably beyond our intention, yet as we are no way apprehensive of occasioning satiety to our readers, while we adduce sentiments so impassioned and beautiful, we shall take the liberty of presenting them with one other scene, different in its kind, but pathetic in the highest degree. It is that in which Priam appears prostrate at the feet of Achilles, imploring from him the body of his dead son. Though this passage is well known, we cannot for that reason resolve to omit it. The whole address however being pretty long, we shall content ourselves with transcribing the latter part of it, which is full of that energy and eloquence of passion which the occasion and circumstances are so much calculated

culated to inspire. We behold the aged and hoary king, in the most supplicating posture, embracing the knees of the murderer of his son, while with his hands lifted up, and streaming eyes, he implores him with the most moving importunity to consent to the redemption of his body.

τῷ γὰρ οὕτως ἔειπε· ἰκάνω νῆας Ἀχαιῶν,
 Λυσσάμενοι παρὰ σὺν, φέρω δ' ἀπέρωντι ἀποινα·
 Ἀλλ' αἰδέο θείης, Ἀχαιεῦ, αὐτοὶ τ' ἐλπίσιν,
 Μνησάμενοι σὺ Πάτρος· ἐγὼ δ' ἐλπίστοτερος περ,
 Ἐτλῆν δ' εἰ οὐκ αὖτις ἐπιχθονίης βροτῶς ἄλλος,
 Ἀνδρὸς παῖδ' ὀφρονέοιο πῶτε σομά χερ' ὀρεγέσθαι.

Il. lib. xxiv. l. 501.

For him through hostile camps I bent my way,
 For him thus prostrate at thy feet I lay;
 Large gifts proportion'd to thy wrath I bear;
 O hear the wretched, and the gods revere!
 Think of thy father, and this face behold!
 See him in me as helpless, and as old!
 Though not so wretched, there he yields to me,
 The first of men in sovereign misery!
 Thus forc'd to kneel, thus grov'ling to embrace
 The scourge and ruin of my realm and race:
 Suppliant my children's murderer to implore,
 And kiss those hands yet reeking with their gore! l. 622.

Such

Such a spectacle, had it been exhibited in dumb shew, must have been deeply affecting, but seconded by the imploring supplications of importunate and passionate prayer, it was irresistible. We cannot bestow a higher encomium upon this moving address, than to observe, that it was capable of exciting sentiments of sympathy in the savage heart of Achilles.

We mentioned likewise vivid and picturesque description as a distinguishing characteristic of original poetic Genius.

True poetry, besides its numbers and measure, is distinguished from most kinds of prose composition by two essential circumstances, the first is, that addressing itself to the imagination it claims an absolute dominion over the whole region of fiction, which is in some respects its peculiar sphere, and in ranging through which it is not always confined even within the verge of probability. The second is, that it claims the privilege of assembling together a variety of real objects, with such attributes and appendages,

appendages, and in such combinations, as to form an agreeable picture, that may please and captivate the fancy. The power of fiction, by which we have shewn original poetic Genius to be principally distinguished, is an indication of a fertile and copious imagination. The power of describing real objects in the manner above-mentioned, is an indication of a vigorous and lively one. Homer possesses both these excellencies in the highest degree. His descriptions are sometimes representations of such scenes as we ourselves may have beheld; only heightened by the colours of a glowing fancy. At other times they are purely fictitious, but wonderfully pleasing. The following description, which contains at the same time a very fine image, intended to give us an idea of the light arising from the fires in the Trojan camp, exhibits as beautiful and exquisite a night scene as is to be met with in ancient or modern poetry.

Ως δ' ὅτ' ἐν οὐρανῷ ἀστὲρ φαεινὴν ἀμφὶ σελήνην
φαίνεται ἀγέφυκα δὲ τ' ἐπ' αὐτῇ νύκτερος αἰθήρ,

Ἐκ τῆς αὐγῆς πᾶσαι σκοτίαι, καὶ πᾶντες αἶρες,
 καὶ νῆπαι· οὐρανὸν δ' αὖ' ὑπερραγῇ ἀσπετος αἰθήρη·
 Πᾶντα δὲ τ' ἑίδεται ἀστρά· γέγηθ' δὲ τε φέροντα ποταμοί·
 Il. lib. viii. l. 551.

As when the moon, refulgent lamp of night !
 O'er heaven's clear azure spreads her sacred light,
 When not a breath disturbs the deep serene,
 And not a cloud o'ercasts the solemn scene;
 Around her throne the vivid planets roll,
 And stars unnumber'd gild the glowing pole,
 O'er the dark trees a yellower verdure shed,
 And tip with silver every mountain's head ;
 Then shine the vales, the rocks in prospect rise ;
 A flood of glory bursts from all the skies :
 The conscious swains rejoicing in the light,
 Eye the blue vault, and bless the useful light. l. 687.

We have here a group of the most pleasing objects imaginable : the clear azure sky, the dead calm of nature, and of night, the mild splendor of the moon, the bright and twinkling stars, the mountains and woods, the rocks and valleys illuminated by their united lustre, all concurring to form a most enchanting and delightful scene. This representation may be called a real scene, since
 it

it is such a one as we have frequently seen. It will make some impression on the most unthinking part of mankind; and to persons of a just taste and contemplative turn of mind it will afford the highest pleasure.

We shall next adduce a few examples of Homer's talent in fictitious scenery. A striking specimen of this kind occurs in the same book in which we found the former passage; and we rather adduce it, as it happens to be an example of truly sublime as well as picturesque description.

Zeus δὲ πατὴρ Ἰδῶθεν εὐτροχὸν ἄρμα καὶ ἵππους
Οὐλυμπονδ' ὤρσασκε, θεῶν δ' ἐξικέτο θάλας.

Τῷ δὲ καὶ ἵππους μὲν λυσι κλυτὸς ἐννοσηγίος,
Ἀρματα δ' ἀμβρομοισι τίθει, κατὰ λιτὰ πτασούς.

Αὐτὸς δὲ χρυσίον ἐπὶ θρόνον ευρύσσω Ζεὺς

Ἔζετο, τὰ δ' ὕπο ποσσὶ μέγας πελεμίζει' Ὀλύμπου.

lib. viii. l. 438.

And now the thunderer meditates his flight
From Ida's summits to the Olympian height;
Swifter than thought the wheels instinctive fly,
Flame through the vast of air, and reach the sky.
'Twas Neptune's charge the coursers to unbrace,
And fix the car on its immortal base;

There

There stood the chariot beaming forth its rays,
 Till with a snowy veil he screen'd the blaze.
 He whose all conscious eyes the world behold,
 Th' eternal thunderer, sat thron'd in gold;
 High heaven the footstool of his feet he makes,
 And wide beneath him all Olympus shakes. l. 542.

The sublime and picturesque are indeed united in this discription in a wonderful degree. We see the almighty thunderer scaling the heavens, in his flaming chariot darting through the empyreal sky with the rapidity of lightening, and seated at last on his throne of burnished gold, in awful majesty, while the heavens and the earth tremble under his feet. We are struck with astonishment at such a sublime description of a fabulous deity, in the writings of an uninlightened heathen. It puts one in mind of the descent of the true Jehovah, described by the inspired author in the eighteenth psalm, by which alone it is excelled. "He bowed the heavens also and came down, and darkness was under his feet; and he rode upon a cherub and did fly;

fly; yea he did fly upon the wings of the wind."

The above passage from Homer likewise naturally recalls to our remembrance a very remarkable one in the revelation, in which the inspired writer presents us with a description of the procedure at the day of judgement, as it was exhibited to him in a vision in the isle of Patmos. I shall insert a part of this description, that the reader may have the pleasure of comparing the sublime conceptions of an apostle, who had been favoured with a revelation of the most stupendous and interesting events, with those of the greatest Poet in the Pagan world. "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them*." The reader will observe that Homer, in order to give us as high an idea as he could of the power and grandeur of Jupiter, represents heaven as

* Rev. xx. 11.

his footstool, and Olympus as shaking from its foundations under his feet. This is undoubtedly a very sublime idea; but how far short does it fall of that given us by the beloved disciple, who tells us, that when, in a vision, he saw the sovereign Judge of the universe seated on his glorious throne, the heavens and the earth did not merely tremble at his presence, were not merely removed out of their place, but utterly disappeared and fled away beyond the verge of creation before the face of this exalted Being, so that there was no place found for them.

We have a remarkable example of the vivacity and strength of poetic description in the lamentation of Achilles upon account of the injury done him by Agamemnon in depriving him of his fair captive. The passions of indignation, grief, and disdain, each in its utmost extreme are seen boiling in his tortured heart, which is ready to burst with the conflict of impetuous passions.

— αὐταρ Ἀχιλλεύς

Δακρυσθεῖς ἑταρῶν αἶφ᾽ ἐξέτο νοσφεὶ λιαδῆς
Θῖν' ἐφ' ἄλος πολιῆς, ὄρουσιν ἐπὶ αἶνονα πόντον,
Πολλὰ δὲ μητρὶ φίλῃ ἤρησατο χεῖρας ὀρεγνύς·

Iliad lib. i. l. 348.

Not so his loss the fierce Achilles bore ;
But sad, retiring to the sounding shore,
O'er the broad margent of the deep he hung,
That kindred deep from whence his mother sprung ;
There bath'd in tears of anger and disdain,
Thus loud lamented to the stormy main. l. 454.

The following description of Jupiter, extracted from the first book of the Iliad, is vivid and sublime in a high degree.

Ἡ, καὶ κυανέην ἐκ' ὄφρυς νεῦσι Κρονίων·
Ἀμβροσίαι δ' ἄρα χεῖται περὶ ῥωσάντο ἀνακτος,
Κρατὸς ἀπ' ἀθανάτοιο· μέγαν δ' ἐλελιξεν Ὀλυμπόν.

l. 528.

He spoke, and awful bends his sable brows,
Shakes his ambrosial curls, and gives the nod,
The stamp of fate and sanction of the god.
High heaven with trembling the dread signal took,
And all Olympus to the centre shook. l. 683.

The

The attitude here is very noble, and Jupiter appears with the most awful and dignified majesty, granting the suit of Thetis, and establishing the decrees of fate with the nod of his head, which makes great Olympus shake from its foundations. Homer indeed rises, as he ought, to the highest pitch of sublimity, when he represents the actions or the appearance of his gods ; but he has also given an air of dignity and grandeur to his heroes, far surpassing that of ordinary mortals, and which strongly assimilates them to the deities themselves. Let the following passage serve as an example.

Ὡς ἂν ἔφην· Αἴας δὲ καρυσσέτα νῶπι χαλκῷ.
 Αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ πάντα περὶ χροῖ ἔωατο τεύχη,
 Στυατ' ἐπειθ' οἷός τε πελώριος ἐρχεται Ἀρης,
 Ὃς τ' εἰσὶν πολέμονδε μετ' ἀνέρας, ὥς τε Κρονίων
 Θυμοβορὴν ἐρίδος μενεΐ ξυνέηκε μάχεσθαι·
 Τοῖος ἂν Αἴας ὤρτο πελώριος, ἔρκος Ἀχαιῶν,
 Μειδίῳ γλοσυροῖσι πρόσωπασι· νεῖθε δὲ ποσσὶν
 Ἥϊε μακρὰ βίβας, κραδῶν δολιχοσκιον ἔγχεος.
 Τότε δὲ καὶ Ἀργεῖοι μέγ' ἐγνήσαν εἰσροσώμεντες·

Τρῶας δὲ τρομος αἶνος ὑψηλῆς γῆρα ἔκασον,
 ἔκτορι τ' αὐτῷ θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι πατάσσει·
 Ἄλλ' ὅπως ἐτι εἶχεν ὑποτρεσαι, ὅδ' ἀναδύσαι
 Ἀφλαφὼν ἐς οὐμῶν, ἐπεὶ προκαλίσσατο χαρμῇ.

Il. lib. vii. l. 206.

Now Ajax brac'd his dazzling armour on,
 Sheath'd in bright steel the giant warrior shone :
 He moves to combat with majestic pace ;
 So stalks in arms the grisly god of Thrace,
 When Jove to punish faithless men prepares,
 And gives whole nations to the waste of wars.
 Onward he came, tremendous as a god ;
 Grimly he smil'd ; earth trembled as he strode :
 His massy jav'lin quiv'ring in his hand,
 He stood the bulwark of the Græcian band.
 Through every argive heart new transport ran ;
 All Troy stood trembling at the mighty man.
 Even Hector paus'd ; and with new doubt oppress'd,
 Felt his great heart suspended in his breast :
 'Twas vain to seek retreat, and vain to fear,
 Himself had challeng'd, and the foe drew near. l. 249.

Yet this brave warrior, upon another
 occasion, retires before Hector, who, aided
 by Jupiter, rules the tide of battle, and
 drives it on his foes. Ajax, however, re-
 treats with a slow and reluctant pace,
 over-

overcome as he was with a heaven-bred
terror.

— οπιθεν δε βαλεν σακος επταβοιον.

Τρετοι δε παπηνας εφ' ομιλου, θηρι εοικως,

Ειτροπαλιζομενος, ολιγον γονυ γυνος αμειβων.

Il. lib. xi. l. 544.

O'er his broad back his moony shield he threw,
And glaring round by tardy steps withdrew; l. 672.

The image which follows is perfectly
characteristic of this fullen and gigantic
hero.

Ως δ' αιθωνα λεοντα βεων απο μεσσαιυλοιο

Εσσευοντο κυνες τη και ανερες αγροιωται. l. 547.

Thus the grim lion his retreat maintains,
Beset with watchful dogs and shouting swains. l. 674.

Ajax was still formidable even in his retreat.

In what terrible majesty does Hector ap-
pear, in the end of the twelfth book; when,
after having broken down the Græcian wall,
he enters through the breach with his
troops.

ὁ δ' αὖτ' ἰδὼν φαιδίμος Ἔκτωρ,

Νυκτὶ θοῇ ἀταλάντος ὑπὸ πτεῖ' λαμπρὴ δὲ χαλκῷ

Σμερδαλέω, τὸν ἔϊστο πέρι χροῖ' δόξα δὲ χερσὶ

Δυρὲ χεῖν' οὐκ ἄν τις μὲν ἐρυκαλοὶ ἀντιβολήσας,

Νοσφίθειον, ὅτ' ἐσθ' ἄλγε' ὑπλάσ'· τυρὶ δ' ὀσσε δειδῆν'.

l. 465.

Now rushing in, the furious chief appears

Gloomy as night, and shakes two shining spears:

A dreadful gleam from his bright armour came,

And from his eye-balls flash'd the living flame.

He moves a god resistless in his course,

And seems a match for more than mortal force. l. 553.

The description of Achilles, invested with the new armour Vulcan had made for him, is so truly animated and sublime, as may well account for the fiction of Homer's having desired to see Achilles in his armour, and of that hero's having shewn himself in such a blaze of glory to the Poet, that he was struck blind with the excessive brightness. What an elevated idea does he give us in the following lines, of the illustrious figure and tremendous appearance of this enraged and revengeful warrior.

— ἐν δὲ μέσσοις κορυσσέτο δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.

Τὸ καὶ ὀδόντων μὲν λανάχη πέλει, τῷ δὲ οἱ ὀσση

λαμπρύνειν ὥσπερ πυρὸς σελαι· ἐν δὲ οἱ πτορ

Δῦν' ἄχος ἀτλήτορ·

lib. xix. l. 364.

Full in the midst high tow'ring o'er the rest,
His limbs in arms divine Achilles drest;
Grief and revenge his furious heart inspire,
His glowing eye-balls roll with living fire;
He grinds his teeth, and furious with delay,
O'erlooks th'embattled hosts, and hopes the bloody day.
l. 390.

To these examples of sublime, as well as vivid description, extracted from the Iliad, we shall beg leave to subjoin two short passages from the Odyssey, which are remarkably picturesque. Menelaus, relating to Telemachus the prophecies of Proteus respecting his own fate, after he had related his prophecies with respect to Ulysses and the other Greeks, that he should be admitted into Elysium, without being subjected to death, gives the following rich and enchanting description, as delivered by Proteus, of the seats of the blessed.

Οὐ νιφετός, οὐτ' αὖ χειμῶν πολὺς ἔτε πρὶ' ὀμβρῶς,
 Ἀλλ' αἰεὶ ζεφύροιο λιγυπρεπόντας αἰπας
 Ωκεῖανός ἀνισσιν ἀναψύχειν ἀνθρώπους. lib. iv. l. 566.

Stern winter smiles on that auspicious clime :
 The fields are florid with unfading prime :
 From the bleak pole no winds inclement blow,
 Mould the round hail, or flake the fleecy snow ;
 But from the breezy deep the blest'd inhale
 The fragrant murmurs of the western gale.

Ulysses having descended into the regions of the dead, in order to be informed of his future fate, by Tiresias the inspired Theban, gives the following lively and terrific description of the spectres he had seen.

— αἱ δ' ἀγέροντο
 Ψυχὰς ὕπ' ἐξ ἑρῆας νεκυῶν κατατεθνήϊων,
 Νυμφαὶ τ' εὐθεῖαι τε πολυτάντοι τε γέροντες.
 Παρθέναι τ' ἀταλαὶ νεοπενθεσάθυμον ἰχυσαι.
 Πολλοὶ δ' ἑταμενοὶ χαλκκρετὶν ἰγχεῖσιν
 Ἄνδρες ἀρηϊφάτοι βεβροτώμενα τευχέ' ἔχοντες
 Οἱ πολλοὶ περὶ βοθρὸν σφειτῶν ἀλλοθεν ἄλλος
 Θεῶσιν ἰαχῇ. lib. xi. l. 36.

When

When lo ! appeared along the dusky coasts,

Thin, airy shoals of visionary ghosts.

Fair, pensive youths, and soft enamour'd maids ;

And wither'd elders, pale and wrinkled shades ;

Ghastly with wounds, the forms of warriors slain

Stalk'd with majestic port, a martial train :

These, and a thousand more swarm'd o'er the ground,

And all the dire assembly shriek'd around.

We feel somewhat of the effect of this description, which makes the blood, as it were, run cold in our veins.

The characteristics of exalted and original Genius last-mentioned, were an irregular greatness, wildness, and enthusiasm of imagination.

Of the irregular greatness and wildness of Homer's imagination, we have already given some instances in those passages which describe Minerva driving the chariot of Diomed against Mars, the reply of Achilles horses to the unjust accusation of their master, and the river Scamander attacking Achilles with all his waves. To these we may add, as instances of the same irregular greatness and wildness of imagination, the story

story of Diomed's pursuing Venus, and wounding her; his attacking the dreadful Mars under the conduct of Minerva; his wounding him also, and sending him bel-
lowing to heaven. However wild and irregularly great these fictions are, perhaps we ought not to censure them as absolutely improbable, when we consider Homer's system of mythology, and the great licence of *invention* it allowed.

With regard to the last-mentioned quality—*enthusiasm* of imagination, we think it superfluous to give any particular instances of it either from the Iliad or the Odyssey, since a certain divine ardour reigns through the whole of them, and confirms the observation of Cicero, *Nemo unquam vir magnus fuit sine afflatu aliquo divino.*

We concluded the section on original Genius in Poetry*, with shewing, that this quality will probably discover itself in *allegories, visions, or some kind of fabulous*

* Book ii. sect. 3.

composition. Accordingly we find, that the exalted and original Genius of Homer has displayed itself in the conduct of the sublime fable of the epopœa; a species of composition which he seems not only to have invented, but to have carried to its highest perfection.

It is hard to say whether in the conduct of this fable Homer has given the most striking proofs of the greatness, or the fertility of his Genius. In the Iliad we have an astonishing display of the grandeur of his imagination; in the Odyssey, of its inexhaustible copiousness and fecundity. As the track of fiction which Homer has run into through a great part of the last-mentioned work, is a remarkable proof of the truth of the position above laid down, that original poetic genius, will naturally discover itself in allegories, visions, or some species of fabulous composition, we shall make a few observations on the fable of the Odyssey, which will open to us a scene of those va-
rious

rious and wonderful adventures that original Genius delights so much to invent.

The Poet having described Ulysses as driven from the coast of the Ciconians, after sustaining a considerable loss of his men, conducts him next to the land of Lotos, or the flowery coast, where the simple, harmless inhabitants, who are termed Lotophagi from their subsisting on the fruit of the tree called Lotos, afford him and his companions a hospitable reception ; but finding from experience that the effect of eating the fruit of this tree was to lull their cares in a sweet oblivion, and make them forget their country and their friends, the hero drags along with him those who had tasted of this intoxicating fruit ; and committing himself and his companions again to the mercy of the waves, they are next landed by the Poet in the horrible island of the Cyclops. The character of this gigantic hideous race forms a fine contrast to that of the Lotophagi, and introduces a diversity of strange incidents. The arrival of Ulysses and his crew on the

Æolian

Æolian coast, and his receiving the adverse winds shut up in a bag from the god of the winds, which being opened by the imprudence of his companions while he was asleep rush out and occasion a most dreadful tempest, is one of those fictions which are peculiar to an imagination that is wild and irregularly great. The tenth and eleventh books of the *Odyssey* abound with various and astonishing adventures. We behold Ulysses and his friends, after escaping with considerable loss from the Læstrigons, a savage and gigantic race, among whom they had been driven by the storm, at last arrived in the island of Circe, where many of them are transformed into hogs by the magic wand of this dread enchantress. We contemplate Ulysses with pleasure restoring his friends to their former shape by his fortitude, aided by the friendly advice of Mercury: and our imaginations riot in delight amidst the bower of Circe, after ceasing to dread the force of her mystic charms. The expedition of Ulysses to the infernal regions

is

is full of strange incidents, calculated alike to excite our curiosity and wonder, and impress our minds with horror. Homer's imagination seems to be inexhaustible. After conducting us through the regions of the dead, and giving us a view of Pluto's dark dominions; after exhibiting several eminent personages in succession, in these dreary abodes, and presenting us with a glimpse of the miseries of the damned, he exhibits a new train of incidents. The Syrens, with their soul-dissolving song, and Scylla and Charybdis with all their horrors are next displayed; and the hero, after suffering another shipwreck upon account of his men having slain some of the oxen consecrated to Apollo, is cast away upon the island of Calypso. In the description of the grotto of this goddess, Homer has lavished the riches of his imagination; we are transported into this ideal region, and in a manner realize the objects that are described. We wander through this charming habitation absorbed in wonder and delight.

light. Such are the beautiful and enchanting allegories (for the greatest part of the fable of the *Odyssey*, at the same time that it possessed a sufficient degree of poetic probability in the age in which Homer wrote, is really allegorical) in which the original Genius of Homer has so remarkably displayed itself.

S E C T. II.

O F O S S I A N*.

THE next great *original* Genius in Poetry, occurring in order of time is Ossian. In examining the merits of this divine Poet we shall proceed in the same order observed

* The learned and ingenious Dr. Blair, professor of rethoric and belles lettres in the university of Edinburgh, published a few years ago a dissertation on the poems of Ossian. As the author of this dissertation hath very properly pointed out Ossian's distinguishing merit in the sphere of poetry, and has illustrated many of the most beautiful passages in his poems in the true spirit of criticism, an after attempt of this kind may at first view appear superfluous, and possibly by some persons may be thought to stand in need of an appology. The proper appology will, it is imagined, readily occur to the intelligent reader. He will easily perceive that in an essay on original Genius it would have been altogether improper to have passed over without notice an author of such

in the former section, and endeavour to shew that the essential characteristics of ele-

such extraordinary eminence in his profession as Ossian, whose compositions so remarkably serve to confirm and illustrate the observations made in a preceding work. If it is farther considered, that the design of this section being to exhibit Ossian as an original Genius in Poetry of the first rank, it was necessary to adduce such passages from his poems as might support his pretensions to that character, the propriety of the first attempt will certainly be acknowledged, however the author may be thought to have failed in the execution of it.

Though some degree of coincidence in the plan of two writers employing their talents on the same subject, especially where the secrets of a celebrated Poet are the theme in question, is really unavoidable, I shall in the present case studiously guard against a coincidence of sentiment; and in order to give a diversity to the criticisms I intend to make, shall chiefly select such passages for the subjects of them as fall not within the compass of the doctor's design to quote and to illustrate. At the same time I take this opportunity of acknowledging my obligations to him, as I make no doubt that the train of sentiment pursued through a great part of this section was in a good measure suggested by the perusal of his elegant dissertation.

vated and original Genius, illustrated in a preceding work, are found in the poems of Ossian, in as high a degree as was consistent with the manners of the age and the state of society in which he lived, * and

* The reader will perhaps suspect, that by attributing any defects that may appear in the poetry of Ossian to the manners of the age or the state of society in which he lived, the author has contradicted a position he laid down, and endeavoured to prove, in the last section of a preceding work, that the early and uncultivated periods of society in which the age of Ossian must doubtless be ranked, were most favourable to the display of original Poetic Genius. Let it be observed however, that the design of the above-mentioned section was to shew that uncultivated society was in general more favourable to original poetry than cultivated life, a position which we think strictly tenable, and which we hope hath been shewn to be true. Such a period will always be found to have the happiest influence on sentimental and descriptive poetry, whether sublime or pathetic; though it must likewise be granted, that civilized life will for the most part introduce a greater variety of incidents and characters into poetical composition, of which the reason will be hereafter assigned.

with

with the subjects and design of his compositions.

Let us then consider how far Ossian has discovered the strength of his Genius in the *invention* of incidents and characters merely human.

It will at first view appear to the attentive reader, that the poems of Ossian are in the main historical, not fictitious. We find the praises of living heroes, as well as of those who had been lately killed, celebrated in them before their friends, who being witnesses of their gallant behaviour, attest the eulogiums of Ossian and his fellow bards; we find actions and events so particularly recorded, at the same time that they are appealed to as sufficiently known, and circumstances likewise mentioned so peculiar to the persons or objects to which they are applied, that we are necessarily led to consider the whole collection of these poems as forming a kind of poetical history of the times.

But though Ossian hath in his poems exhibited real characters and events, as appears from the reasons above-mentioned, these are doubtless varnished over by his imagination and art. Like a skilful painter, who desires to render his pieces beautiful, as well as just imitations of nature, he presents us generally with an advantageous resemblance, though true, and bestows those glowing tints which without blending or confounding the characteristic features, heighten the expression of the several figures and render them lovely to the eye as well as affecting to the heart. Ossian drew his colouring from the enthusiasm of his own vivid and ardent imagination, which was inflamed with the view of the heroic actions of his predecessors and contemporaries; whence in his descriptions of their exploits, he naturally ran into those sublime strains of panegyric on his favourite heroes, which, though not conformable to literal truth, are however not beyond the verge of strict probability.

That

That no incidents and no human characters purely fictitious are to be found in these poems, will appear no way surprizing, if we attend to the period of society, and to the peculiar manners of the age in which they were composed, circumstances that will always influence the spirit of poetry in a very remarkable degree.

In the early periods of society, the objects which most powerfully and universally strike the imagination are the various appearances of wild and uncultivated nature; the vicissitudes of seasons, and the more obvious revolutions of the heavenly bodies. Rocks and mountains, woods and valleys, storms and tempests, thunder and lightning, rains and sunshine, a cloudy atmosphere and a serene sky, lakes and fountains, rivers and seas, together with the birds of prey and the wild beasts of the forest, generally form the sphere of imagery, beyond which poetic Genius will seldom range. If such a period of society is distinguished by a martial spirit, as in a northern country in the more early

ages is usually the case, the exploits of heroes will be the theme of the poet's song, which will rise in sublimity in proportion to the strength of his Genius, and his having caught the inspiration of his subject. If in a more advanced state of society, and by the influence of a genial and happy temperature of climate, the minds of men are formed to relish rural tranquility, and to place their happiness in cultivating the ground and feeding their flocks, the poetry of those times will correspond to the peaceful and pleasant occupations of mankind. The pastoral, elegiac and descriptive kinds will chiefly prevail. The artless loves of simple swains, their pleasures and pains, together with representations of the beauties of primæval nature, will be the favourite subjects of the muses.

In the first of these periods, rather than in the second, Ossian lived, as is manifest from the general strain of his poetry, in which we scarce find any allusion to the arts of civilized life. At the same time, that martial

tial spirit which we have observed to distinguish such a period in a northern climate, and was so remarkably predominant in the age of Ossian, was in many of his heroes tempered with a generosity of mind, an hospitality of disposition, and a sensibility to the charms of the fair sex, which by their union in different proportions variously expressed concurred in forming a set of characters highly favourable to the dignity of epic poetry. Such characters Ossian has presented us with; characters not fictitious, any more than the events they are employed to effectuate, but real; for as the manners and spirit of the times had a natural tendency to propagate generosity of sentiment, and martial virtue, the person most eminent in these, became by undoubted right the hero of his poems, and he had no occasion for inventing one altogether imaginary. Indeed in his situation it must have been extremely difficult, if not altogether impracticable, to have succeeded in such an attempt. Ossian, confined as was his sphere of obser-

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vation,

vation, unacquainted with the history of
 other nations, and with the variety of hu-
 man characters, could scarce have an idea of
 any other excellence or accomplishment
 than what distinguished the most renowned
 of his contemporaries, and particularly his
 own father. Had he written twenty epic
 poems, they must have been dignified with
 the same characters, and filled up with simi-
 lar incidents, for observation, history and
 tradition, the principal sources from which
 poets derive the ground work of their com-
 positions, could supply Ossian with very little
 diversity of either, though there is really as
 much variety both in the incidents and cha-
 racters he has presented us with as was
 compatible with the age in which his poems
 were composed, which we shall have occa-
 sion to shew immediately. In the mean
 time we shall readily allow that the Genius
 of Ossian does not appear in its utmost force
 either in the exhibition of the one or the
 other, since the incidents are real, not in-
 vented, and the human characters copied
 from

from the life, not created; and though to copy these as he has done, not only by expressing the likeness, but by superadding those ornamental graces and finishing touches which render them more worthy of our admiration, without injuring the resemblance, or violating the unity of manners, requires great vivacity and strength of imagination, as well as nicety of judgment; yet that creative power of the mind whose peculiar office is fiction is not exercised in a very high degree.

But because Ossian has presented us with no incidents or human characters purely fictitious, shall we therefore conclude that in a different situation he would have been incapable of inventing them. By no means. Had he surveyed mankind in a more advanced state of civility, and acquired a more extensive knowledge of human nature, by tradition, history, and especially by his own observations on that variety of tempers and passions which are to be found among the species, and which the gradual progress of
society

society in its rudest form to the highest pitch of politeness, the various revolutions of human affairs, the surprizing discoveries of art, and the excessive refinements of modern manners have given birth to, he would doubtless have exhibited as great a variety both of incidents, and of original characters strongly marked, as any poet whatever.

Though we have shewn that the uncultivated periods of society are in general most favourable to the display of original poetic Genius, yet it must on the other hand be acknowledged that for the invention of incidents, and especially for the invention and just exhibition of human characters properly diversified, cultivated life affords superior advantages. In the former case there are few objects presented to the mind capable of influencing the imagination or the passions, and of consequence there is little scope afforded for a diversity of character. It is true indeed that those objects, though few in number, operating with
united

united energy, strike the imagination with greater force, as the divided streams of a river collected together, form one stronger and more rapid current than when they flowed in separate channels; whence it should seem the character will be more strongly marked: but then it is also to be observed that the same objects striking upon the mind more equally, render it more difficult to distinguish their different impressions, and the different characters formed by those impressions. There are certain original, and if we may be allowed the expression, radical passions, deeply implanted in the human mind, which, though variously modified by the shifting scenes of successive ages, exist under one form or another in every period of society. There are other passions wholly adventitious, which like smothered fire lie slumbering in the human heart, perhaps for many centuries, till the destined hour arrive when the breath of ambition, the instigations of avarice, and the allurements of sensual pleasure kindle the

the hidden sparks, and blow them into a flame. These adventitious passions, as we have chosen to call them, break forth only in cultivated life, deriving their existence in a manner from the objects that are peculiar to it; and when they break forth produce a great variety of characters, not to be found amidst the artless uniform simplicity of earlier ages. It will always therefore, for the reasons above expressed, be much easier to invent fictitious characters, or to exhibit a variety of real ones in cultivated than in uncultivated life. These observations will sufficiently account for any want of invention, or want of variety that may appear in the characters of Ossian. We have been the more particular on these heads, as some persons may be of opinion that though in sublimity of sentiment, in vivacity and strength of description, he may justly claim a full equality of merit with Homer himself, yet in the invention both of incidents and characters he is greatly inferior to the Græcian bard. This inferiority however
evidently

evidently proceeds from the different periods of society in which those divine poets lived. Though the age in which Homer wrote his Iliad and Oddysey was far from being polished, yet were the arts of civility much farther advanced than they were in the age in which Ossian composed Fingal and Temora; and therefore it must have been easier for Homer to present us with a variety of characters, which he might partly have copied from the life, partly created, and partly derived from tradition, a source which in ancient Greece could have supplied him with greater abundance both of incidents and characters for the conduct of an epic poem, than it could have done for Ossian, who had no materials for his imagination to work upon, excepting what he collected from his own observations, and from the songs of preceding bards; either or both of which could afford little variety of characters or incidents in an unpolished age.

It farther deserves our attention, that Ossian never thought of trying the strength of

of his Genius in the invention of the one or the other, which would by no means have corresponded to his design; and if he had, it is impossible he should ever have succeeded in it as Homer has done, unless he had lived in the age and country of Homer.

Having already allowed that the incidents we meet with in the poems of Ossian are real, not fictitious, and that the human characters exhibited in these are copied from the life, rather than created, of which we have assigned the causes, it follows that neither of these alone, nor indeed both of them united together, can establish his pretensions to truly original and inventive Genius. We must therefore try his compositions by the other criterions of this quality, and observe how far they are found in these; but let us first make a few remarks upon the human characters which Ossian has introduced into his poems, from which perhaps it will appear that they are more diversified than we are at first view apt to imagine, and really as different as, considering the
the

the state of society in which he lived; and the uniform pursuits of men in that state, they can be expected to be.

The character of Fingal, the principal hero, and the poet's own father, is a highly finished one. There is certainly no hero in the Iliad, or the Odyfsey, who is at once so brave and amiable as this renowned king of Morven*. It is well known that Hector, whose character is of all the Homeric heroes the most complete, greatly sullies the lustre of his glorious actions by his insult over the fallen Patroclus. On the other hand, the conduct of Fingal appears uniformly illustrious and great, without one mean or inhumane action to tarnish the splendor of his fame: He is equally the object of our ad-

* The reader will observe that we are here speaking of the comparative dignity and excellence of the principal characters of both poets, not of their variety, or the invention discovered in the exhibition of them, in which we have already acknowledged the pre-eminence of Homer,

miration,

miration, esteem, and love. We contemplate his distinguished exploits with admiring astonishment; but his humane generosity to those whom he had conquered, his benevolence to all, his paternal affection, his conjugal tenderness, and the clemency he shews to Starvo and Swaran, upon account of their relation to Aganduca, once the object of his love, an instance of exquisite sensibility of passion and delicacy of sentiment, conciliate our most affectionate respect.

Cuhullin makes a capital figure in the poems of Ossian; and though in many respects his character is similar to that of Fingal, it is at the same time as different from it as we can suppose two heroic characters of eminent worth to be, in an age in which the arts of luxury as yet unknown could not produce that diversity of taste and disposition which is their natural effect in more cultivated periods. The situation in which he is exhibited after his defeat by Swaran is very particular and characteristic;

tic*, as it distinguishes him properly from Fingal, who being always invincible, had no occasion to display the behaviour of an unsuccessful and desponding warrior. Cuchullin's delicate sense of honour, and his keen vexation for the loss of victory and fame in that critical juncture, while they raise our admiration of his greatness of soul, excite also our sympathy with him in his misfortunes, a passion which is never once excited in favour of Fingal, whose character and successes are too great to draw forth the tear of pity, which is never shed but for the fallible and the unfortunate.

The character of Cathmor is highly respectable. Besides that bravery common to every hero, he is distinguished by a peculiar benevolence and hospitality of disposition, which denominates him the friend of strangers, and by the tenderness of his affection to the maid of Inishuna. Hence we take a deep interest in the various turns of his

* Fingal, book iv.

fortune, and mourn his untimely death by the hand of Fingal, while we admire his previous exploits.

The portrait which Ossian has drawn of himself, is indeed a master-piece. He not only appears in the light of a distinguished warrior, generous as well as brave, and possessed of exquisite sensibility, but of an aged venerable bard, subjected to the most melancholy vicissitudes of fortune, weak, and blind; the sole survivor of his family, the last of the race of Fingal. All these circumstances united, render his situation deeply affecting; and it is impossible for one who has the least feeling, to read the history which he gives of his misfortunes, without tenderly commiserating, and in some measure participating them. Never was there a more moving picture exhibited of distressful virtue.

That the reader may have some idea of Ossian's talent in drawing characters, we shall present him with the draught which he has exhibited of his own, after reminding him, that

that in the Poet's delineation of it he must not expect that delicacy of manner, which is one of the effects of modern refinement. The picture is drawn in the strongest colours, and exposed in the fullest and most glaring light, without discovering any intention upon the part of the artist, either to veil, or to moderate its lustre. Though the poems of Ossian present their author to our view in various scenes and periods of life, we choose to consider him as he appears in the decline of his age, after the ardour and fire of youth were abated, and had given place to the sage dictates of experience, united with a sublime melancholy, which disposed him to moralize on the vicissitudes of human affairs, because this view of his character is the most particular and affecting one we can take of it.

Sometimes we find him reflecting on the weakness and miseries of old age with regret, while he thinks of the exploits and vigour of his youth, and seems to envy those who had fallen in the full career of their

fame.—“ But why should Ossian sing of battles?—For never more shall my steel shine in war. I remember the days of my youth with sorrow, when I feel the weakness of my arm. Happy are they who fell in their youth, in the midst of their renown. They have not beheld the tombs of their friends ; or failed to bend the bow of their strength.” Then breaking off by a fine apostrophe to Malvina, he desires her to convey him to the scenes of his former pleasures, that he may enjoy the soothing consolation of recalling to his remembrance the joys of his youth. “ But lead me, O Malvina, to the sound of my woods, and the roar of my mountain-streams. Let the chace be heard on Cona ; that I may think on the days of other years.—And bring me the harp, O maid, that I may touch it, when the light of my soul shall arise.” A little after he comforts himself under the infirmities of age, with the prospect of enjoying that fame after death which hath been an object of ambition to
the

the greatest geniuses in all ages. "The sons of the feeble hereafter will lift the voice on Cona, and looking up to the rocks, say, "Here Ossian dwelt." They shall admire the chiefs of old, and the race that are no more *." At other times, when any circumstance is suggested which recalls the idea of his youthful exploits, he kindles with ardour at the thought, and repeats them with the enthusiasm of a warrior, whose soul still glowed with a passion for military fame. Fancying his friend Toscar to make mention of his name with honour to Malvina, when she joined the awful shades of her father; the Poet, highly pleased with this supposed remembrance of him, exclaims in a very spirited manner, "And dost thou remember, Ossian, Carborn Toscar, son of Conloch? The battles of our youth were many; our swords went together to the field. They saw us coming like two falling rocks; and the sons of the stronger fled.

* Vol. I. p. 146, 147. octavo edit.

There come the warriors of Cona, they said; and their steps are in the paths of the vanquished *." I have adduced some passages which serve to mark the spirit of heroism in Ossian's character, and to shew the pleasure with which the venerable warrior reflected and dwelt on the achievements of his youth. I shall select another, which will give the reader an idea of the tenderness and sensibility of his soul, discovered indeed upon a very affecting occasion, the death of his beloved Oscar. "Andallest thou, son of my fame! And shall I never see thee, Oscar! When others hear of their sons, I shall not hear of thee. The moss is on the stones of his tomb, and the mournful wind is there. The battle shall be fought without him; he shall not pursue the dark brown hinds†". In the end of the poem entitled the war of Inisthona, we meet with a most poetical wish, accompanied with a circumstance remarkably pathetic. We may

* Vol. I. p. 361.

† Page 255.

suppose

suppose the aged bard now deprived of his sight, groping in the dark, and calling for the assistance of his friends in the following strain, “ O lay me, *ye that see the light*, near some rock of my hills : let the thick hazels be around, let the rustling oak be near. Green be the place of my rest ; and let the sound of the distant torrent be heard.” Then addressing himself to Malvina, he adds, “ Daughter of Toscar, take the harp, and raise the lovely song of Selma ; that sleep may overtake my soul in the midst of joy ; that the dreams of my youth may return, and the days of the mighty Fingal.” Soon after, fancying himself almost lulled asleep by the sound of Malvina’s harp, and pleasant dreams beginning to arise in his soul ; and wishing to indulge the agreeable soothing delirium, he forbids his friends to interrupt his slumbers. “ Ye sons of the chase, stand far distant, nor disturb my rest. The bard of other times now converses with his fathers the chiefs of the days of old.—Sons of the chase, stand far distant ;

disturb not the dreams of Ossian*.” To these I shall only add one other passage, which exhibits Ossian on the utmost verge of life, and in the near prospect of his dissolution. Considering all the objects around him as the monitors or harbingers of his death, under the influence of this persuasion, he imagines he hears the voice of Fingal calling him away to fly with his fathers on clouds; to which the poet, willing to leave the world, and to rejoin the honoured shades of his ancestors, replies, “And come I will, thou King of men! the life of Ossian fails. I begin to vanish on Cona; and my steps are not seen in Selma, Beside the stones of Mora I shall fall asleep. The winds, whistling in my grey hair, shall not waken me.—Depart on thy wings, O wind! Thou canst not disturb the rest of the bard. The night is long, but his eyes are heavy; depart thou rustling blast†”. These passages exhibit to us a very amiable and respect-

* Page 156, 157.

† Page 373.

able character, and I believe it will be allowed that they represent that character in a very distinct and affecting light.

Oscar and Fillan, are favourite characters of Ossian, they are indeed in most respects similar, as both of them are brave, ardent, and amiable. Yet there are some discriminating strokes, which in the eye of a nice judge sufficiently distinguish their characters. Though they are both of them full of ardour, Fillan is rather the most eager and enterprizing of the two. The unsuspecting confidence of Oscar is likewise finely marked, by contrasting it with the detestable perfidy of the gloomy, cruel, and insidious Cairbre; as the tenderness of his affection for Malvina distinguishes him in a very important respect from Fillan, of whose attachments to any particular fair one we have no account.

But one of the most consummate characters which this poet has exhibited, is that of Connal. This hero is the Ulysses of Ossian; though he is a far more complete character

character than the Græcian chief. Like him he is distinguished by his profound wisdom, by his cautious prudence, and by his calm temperate valour.

But he is free of that cunning and artifice, which so much distinguish Ulysses, and which rather diminish than aggrandize the true hero. His penetrating sagacity and circumspective prudence, discovered in the sage counsel he gives to Cuchullin in the first book of Fingal, warning him to avoid a battle with Swaran, till the arrival of the king of Moruen, are admirably contrasted with the precipitate temerity of Calmar, who advises an immediate attack of the enemy. His steady bravery and good conduct, in repairing as much as possible the error which Cuchullin had committed by following the advice of Calmar, is displayed in covering the retreat of the Irish forces. And lastly, his constant and undissembled friendship for Cuchullin, forms a distinguishing part of his character, and sets it in a very amiable as well as particular light.

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Ossian's female characters, are indeed less distinctly marked, though they are by no means confounded. It was unnecessary to draw their pictures at full length, not being engaged in the active scenes of life, except when they sometimes attend their lovers in disguise. The poet however, has hit off some striking features even of these. How happily for instance has he characterized his own mistress, afterwards his wife, by a single epithet, expressive of that modesty, softness, and complacency, which constitute the perfection of feminine excellence, "the mildly blushing Eirallin." Carril likewise, a contemporary bard with Ossian, celebrating her accomplishments, in the presence of our poet, touches upon a circumstance which shews this lady to have been possessed of that tender sensibility of soul, which is so peculiarly amiable in a female character. He tells Ossian, that he "saw the tear on her cheek, while she sung the fall of Cormac, the youth that died for her love;" and observes "that her soul was touched

touched for the unhappy, though she loved him not." * Oithona, is distinguished by a nice sense of honour, which would not allow her to survive the loss of her reputation, and by the peculiar delicacy, generosity and tenderness of her affection to the son of Morni. The haughtiness of Deugala, is intimated by a finely expressive metaphor. "She was covered with the light of beauty; but her heart was the house of pride." Of all Ossian's female characters however, that of Malvina, the mistress of Oscar, is the most distinguished. This lady, so celebrated for her beauty, and who appears to have been possessed of the most enchanting accomplishments, may be regarded as the muse of Ossian, since she is often the theme and inspirer of his poetry. Many of his songs were composed in order to sooth her grief, as well as his own, for the death of Oscar, and she seems to have entered into the spirit of them with a very intense feel-

* Fingal, book v. towards the end.

ing. Her whole character is indeed distinguished by the most exquisite sensibility, and by the tenderness, the ardour, and the constancy of her affection for Oscar.

Having made these observations upon some of the real human characters of Ossian, we shall now proceed to consider some of the imaginary ones which he has introduced. This survey will set the Genius of our poet in a very conspicuous light, and shew him to have been possessed of the most astonishing powers of imagination, discovering themselves in the highest degree of that kind of *invention* which was most peculiarly adapted to his situation. The characters we have in view are those of the supernatural kind, such as the ghosts of deceased bards and heroes, which by a sort of magical enchantment he has called forth into existence, and introduced again upon the stage, with that awful solemnity, and with all those attributes and appendages, which a strongly agitated imagination naturally appropriates to those shadowy, unsubstantial

stantial beings. There is no province of fiction which affords such an unlimited range for the display of an inventive Genius, as what the invifible world with the natures, appearances and offices of its unknown inhabitants prefent to us. In this province exalted Genius delights to range and to try its ftrength, a province in which none but thofe poffeffed of the above mentioned quality have ever fucceeded, or can hope to fucceed. Poets poffeffed of a moderate fhare of Genius will always fail in the attempt. To invent fuch fupernatural beings, to defcribe their form and gefture, to relate their fpeech, and to affign their offices with propriety, and with all the colours of nature and life, muft require an imagination fo ftrongly affected, and imprefsed with fuch a vivid idea of thofe vifionary objects, as we may fuppose the actual fight of them would produce. It is this vivacity and ftrength of conception, difcovered by a correfponding vivacity and
force

force of description, which render the ghosts of Ossian and Shakespeare present as it were to the very eyes of their readers. One is at a loss to determine, in which of these divine Poets, the superiour force of a creative imagination is displayed in representations of this nature. Before Ossian's compositions were known, Shakespeare was unrivalled in such descriptions; and in these they are certainly both unequalled by any other author whatever. We are at present to consider the figures of this kind the former has presented us with.

One of the most striking in all his compositions, is no doubt the ghost of Crugal, in the beginning of the third book of Fingal, on which however, as its beauties must be discerned by every reader of taste, and have been illustrated by Dr. Blair, we shall not make any particular remarks. The description of the appearance of the ghost of Tremor however, in the poem entitled the war of Caros, though it has been also taken
notice

notice of by the ingenious author just now mentioned, but less particularly criticized, I shall take the liberty to quote, and to point out its most remarkable beauties, as this passage exhibits one of the most signal efforts of a vivid and creative imagination. Observe how the preceding scenery is calculated to raise at once expectation and terror in the mind of the reader. "Oscar slowly ascends the hill. The meteors of the night are setting on the heath before him. A distant torrent faintly roars. Unfrequent blasts rush through aged oaks. The half-enlightened moon sinks dim, and red behind her hill.—Feeble voices are heard on the heath.—Oscar drew his sword*." The circumstances here mentioned seem to be so suitable to the awful occasion, and by a certain association of ideas are so adopted to terrify the imagination, that I believe there are few possessed of so much fortitude as

* Vol. i. p. 143.

not to be affected by their concurrence. Thus alarmed, we wait the following solemn scene in still and dread suspense. "Trenmor came from his hill at the voice of his mighty son. A cloud, like the steed of the stranger, supported his airy limbs. His robe is of the mist of Lano, that brings death to the people. His sword is a meteor half extinguished. His face is without form and dark. He sighed thrice over the heroe, and thrice the winds of the night roared around.—Many were his words to Oscar*." The description of Trenmor's appearance in this passage is so particular and vivid, that in reading it we feel upon our minds somewhat of the effects of a real vision; and the idea of the majestic shadowy form is almost as strongly impressed upon our imaginations as if we had seen it gliding before our eyes. The attitude and action, the insignia and appendages of this

* Page 144.

visionary heroe, are conceived with great strength and propriety of fancy. He is seated on a cloud; his robe is formed of the mist of Lano, (a circumstance that from its particularity renders the description more picturesque) his sword appears like a dim meteor; he sighed thrice over his illustrious descendent, and the roaring blasts as often answered to his sighs. His departure is described by a just and beautiful image. "He slowly vanished like the mist that melts on the sunny hill*."

The appearance of the ghost of Cathmor to Sulmalla, in the eighth book of Temora, likewise deserves our notice. This lady had, at the desire of Cathmor, retired to a remote cave before his engagement with Fingal. She not having heard of his death, fancies she sees him returning from the battle, and prepares to meet him, but we are told "It was the spirit of Cathmor, stalking large, a gleaming form." "He sunk by the hollow

stream that roared between the hills*," The then visionary substance, and gradual evanescence of the ghost is described in a very picturesque manner.—“ He retired in mist, gradual vanish his limbs of smoak, and mix with the mountain wind†”

The seventh book of *Temora* opens with a description of the materials of which the thin airy vehicles of ghosts are composed, and of the manner in which they are fashioned. Both these are sketched out with a surprizing wildness and fertility of fancy. “ Wide over Lara’s stream is poured the vapour, dark, and deep: the moon, like a dim shield is swimming through its folds. With this clothe the spirits of old their sudden gestures on the wind, when they stride from blast to blast, along the dusky face of the night‡.” With the same wildness of fancy, the Poet represents Conar, one of the ancestors of Fillan, as forming a shadowy vehicle of mist, for the ghost of

* Vol. ii. p. 202. † Page 203. ‡ Vol. ii. p. 155.

this heroic, till the song should rise. This strange office is assigned with great propriety to a relation of Fillan, and a collateral branch of the race of Morven. To increase the solemnity of the scene, and raise the attention of the reader to the appearance of the young warrior's ghost, Conar is represented as rushing onward in the course of the winds, in order to receive and shroud the fair spirit in mist. "A sound came from the desert, the rushing course of Conar in winds. He poured his deep mist on Fillan at blue winding Lubar." The attitude and changing appearances of the visionary form are conceived with great strength and vivacity of imagination. "Dark and mournful sat the ghost, bending in his grey ridge of smook. The blast at times rolled him together; but the lovely form returned again*." These few examples will be sufficient to show the force, the grandeur, and the inventive power of Ossian's imagination,

* Page 157.

discovered in the exhibition of supernatural characters; to execute which with real mastery, as he has done, is unquestionably the highest effort of original Poetic Genius. We shall next consider Ossian's talent in the third species of *invention* above mentioned, which was that of *new and splendid imagery*, and which we likewise regarded as highly characteristical of original Genius in Poetry.

In this species of *invention* it must be confessed Ossian abounds more than any author whatever. He pours forth a blaze of metaphors and images, in almost every passage of his poems. The superabundance of these, in the more early periods of society, have by Dr. Blair been justly resolved into "the want of proper names for objects, and into the influence of imagination and passion over the form of expression." In Ossian however they were chiefly the effect of the natural exuberance and effervescence (so to speak) of a plastic imagination; which is exercised in a very high degree in inventing these, as well as in adapting their applica-

tion to the objects they are intended to illustrate.

The sphere of Ossian's imagery was indeed confined, in comparison of the widely extended empire of nature and art now subjected to poetic dominion; but that sphere, though narrow, abounded with objects of incomparable dignity and grandeur, such as are particularly favourable to the more sublime species of Poetry, and Ossian has succeeded admirably in the selection of these objects. He is almost the only poet who has never once debased the dignity of his sentiments by admitting low or ungraceful images in the illustration of them. On the contrary, he has greatly elevated both his sentiments and descriptions by the grandeur of his imagery. What a sublime idea does he give us of the superiour valour of Oscar, and of the devastation which he spread through the ranks of battle, by the following simile. "From my rock I shall see thee, Oscar, a dreadful form ascending in fight, like the appearance of ghosts amidst
the

the storms they raise*." The prowess of Fillan is represented by an apposite and well chosen metaphor implying irresistible force. "Fillan is a beam of fire: from wing to wing is his wasteful course. The ridges of war melt before him†." In another passage, the impetuosity and ardor of this young warrior, upon seeing the enemy whom he is just going to attack, is described by a very just and expressive image. "An eagle he seemed with sounding wings, calling the wind to his rock, when he sees the coming forth of the roes on Lutha's rushy field‡." But the greatness of Ossian's genius no where so remarkably appears as in the images he has derived from the appearances of spirits and ghosts, which give a solemn sublimity to his descriptions, accompanied with circumstances of terror. One of these we have already quoted. The following will serve as another example of the like sublime awful and terrific grandeur. The appearance

* Vol. ii. p. 216. † Ib. p. 133. ‡ Ib. p. 135.

of Fingal "when his wrath arose," and he was preparing to revenge the death of Fillan, is thus amazingly exhibited to us, "Unequal were his steps on high, as he shone in the beam of the oak. He was dreadful as the form of the spirit of night, when he cloaths on hills his wild gestures with mist, and issuing forth on the troubled ocean mounts the car of winds*." This description is picturesque and elevated in the highest degree. The form of Fingal, varying by the light of the oak, is very happily compared to the changing figure of a spirit cloathing his wild gestures with mist, and our admiration of the matchless valour of this hero is raised to the utmost pitch by the circumstances which are added in the latter part of the description, to heighten the simile, and render it more complete. Ossian seems to be particularly fond of such awful and terrible images as these; and frequently compares his most celebrated war-

* Vol. ii. p. 145.

riours to those visionary beings whose power, though not distinctly known by us, is however supposed to be more than human; and though these images frequently occur in his poems, yet being judiciously varied in the circumstances, they never fail to produce the intended effect, which is to aggrandize his principal heroes by comparisons that raise them far above the ordinary standards of human excellence. Cuchullin is a capital figure in Ossian's poetry; and the author seems to be desirous of impressing upon our minds a high idea of his warlike and tremendous appearance in battle, as well as of his distinguished exploits; and indeed he has entirely accomplished his intention by the following exalted similitude, which arrays him in all the terrors of Bellona or Mars. "The chief moves before in arms, like an angry ghost before a cloud; when meteors inclose him with fire, and the dark winds are in his hand*." The poet trans-

* Vol. i. p. 39.

fers as it were, by this means, the imaginary power of the ghost to the hero.

Osian likewise possessed the talent of varying his imagery according to the different subjects he treats, or scenes he describes. It is sublime and terrible, or elegant and tender, as occasion and propriety require. We have given several instances of the former; we shall now adduce a few examples of the latter. The feeble voice of a ghost is beautifully compared to "the humming of the mountain bee, or collected flies of evening*." The fall of Aganduca, killed by her barbarous father, is described by the following just and most elegant image. "She fell like a wreath of snow that slides from the rocks of Ronan, when the woods are still, and the echo deepens in the vale†." Concealed grief it is well known preys upon the vitals, impairs the constitution, and gradually exhausts the springs of life. Osian has represented the effects of its silent

* Vol. i. p. 40.

† Ib. p. 55.

wasteful

wasteful depredations by a finely expressive similitude. "But sorrow wastes the mournful, O daughter of Toscar, and their days are few. They fall away like the flower on which the sun looks in his strength after the mildew has passed over it, and its head is heavy with the drops of night*." Trees and flowers have been a copious source of imagery to poets in all ages: and indeed, similitudes formed upon these, though often reiterated, will, if they are justly applied, be always pleasing. There is something in their state, vicissitudes and duration, so congenial to the condition and revolutions of man, that we taste a sweetly soothing pleasure in tracing the resemblance. Ossian has formed several images upon these which would have made a distinguished figure in any of the Greek or Roman classics. That by which the death of the three sons of Ufnath is described is remarkably elegant and beautiful; but as its beauties have been

* Vol. i. p. 346.

taken notice of by the author of the dissertation on the poems of Ossian, I shall content myself with referring the reader to the passage in which it is contained*." I must beg leave however to quote an image of the same kind, varied only in its circumstances, (which hath likewise been inserted, though not illustrated in the dissertation above mentioned,) upon account of the tender idea it conveys to the mind of the reader. Malvina thus addresses her lover, whom she had seen in her dreams. " I was a lovely tree in thy presence, Oscar, with all my branches around me ; but thy death came like the blast of the desert, and laid my green head low. The spring returned with its showers, but no leaf of mine arose†." It was impossible by any representation, however pathetic, to describe the forlorn and disconsolate condition of the unfortunate fair one so successfully as by the image here used ; which at once alludes to her former happy

* Vol. i. p. 238.

† lb. p. 345.

its

state, to its present sad reverse, and to the sudden and irremediable stroke of fate that was the occasion of her grief, thereby awakening our tenderest and strongest sympathy with her misfortunes.

From a variety of beautiful images that occur in Berrathon, which is said to have been the last sound of the voice of Cona, a conjecture rendered highly probable from several particular passages to be found in it, as well as from that air of sublime and pensive melancholy which runs through the whole of it, I shall only select one that exhibits the situation of the venerable bard himself, bowing under age and infirmities, when he believes that he is just upon the point of leaving the world, and going to join his friends "in their airy halls." The scenery is altogether suited to his declining state, and the following image in particular exhibits that state in a light equally picturesque and pathetic. "The flower hangs its heavy head, waving at times to the gale. Why dost thou awake me, O gale, it seems
to

to say? I am covered with the drops of heaven. The time of my fading is near, and the blast that shall scatter my leaves. To-morrow shall the traveller come; he that saw me in my beauty shall come; his eyes will search the field, but they will not find me. So shall they search in vain for the voice of Cona, after it has failed in the field*." The fleeting life of man hath been often compared to a flower that fades and dies, but the similitude hath been seldom so elegantly carried on, and so highly finished, as in the passage above adduced.

The last species of *invention*, in which we shewed that original Poetic Genius would excell, was that of sentiment; and we observed that the compositions of every great original Genius in poetry would be particularly distinguished by sublime and pathetic

* Vol. i. p. 357. The last part of this passage brings to mind a similar one in the book of Job. For now shall I sleep in the dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be. ch. vii. ver. 21.

sentiments. Every reader of taste will perceive that the poems of Ossian are full of these. We shall adduce however a few examples in confirmation of the theory laid down in the preceeding book.

Conban Carglass, lamenting the death of her father, killed by Starno, while she herself was shut up in a cave, addresses her sire in this dismal situation, as if supplicating his aid, in the following strain, fancying at the same time she had often seen his shadowy form. "Thou sometimes hidest the moon with thy shield. I have seen her dim in heaven. Thou kindlest thy hair into meteors, and failest along the night*." The latter part of this quotation, which represents his hair as kindled into meteors, is a stroke of the most daring and picturesque sublimity, far beyond the reach of an ordinary Genius.

It is justly observed of Ossian, by the author of the dissertation on his poems, that

* Vol. ii. p. 244. l. 1.

he “ moves in the high region of the grand and the pathetic, from which he scarce ever descends.” We may add, that he almost constantly unites the picturesque with the sublime, in consequence of those vivid ideas which his imagination presented to him. Of both these qualities joined together in a most uncommon degree we have an instance in Berrathon, where the Poet, calling upon the winds to bear the “ mournful sound of his harp to Fingal’s airy hall,” under the dominion of poetic enthusiasm, imagines his father’s majestic ghost disclosed to his view. “ The blast of the north opens thy gates, O king! and I behold thee sitting on mist, dimly gleaming in all thine arms. Thy form now is not the terror of the valiant, but like a watery cloud, when we see the stars behind it with their weeping eyes. Thy shield is like the aged moon; thy sword a vapour half kindled with fire*.” Desirous however to give us a high idea

* Vol. i. p. 371.

of the superiority of Fingal over every other hero, even in this shadowy state of existence, he adds, "But thy steps are on the winds of the desert; and the storms darken in thy hand. Thou takest the sun in thy wrath, and hidest him in thy clouds*." This sublime representation, in which he gives the visionary hero power over the sun and the storms, is calculated to raise our admiration of his dreadful grandeur to the utmost pitch. In the three passages last quoted the reader will observe that sublimity of sentiment and description are both united together. We shall adduce two others, the merit of which rests upon the sublimity of the sentiment alone. Fingal having resigned the command of the army to Gaul the son of Morni, and foreseeing the slaughter of his troops by the enemy, addresses the ghosts of the warriors that had been lately slain in the following abrupt, sublime, and striking apostrophe, in which

* Vol. i. p. 371.

he recommends those who were to fall in the ensuing battle to their friendly offices and care. "O ye ghosts of heroes dead! ye riders of the storm of Cromla! receive my falling people with joy, and bring them to your hills*." The wild grandeur of the sentiment expressed in the single epithet "Ye riders of the storm of Cromla," heightened likewise by the extemporary address to those visionary beings, is peculiarly calculated at once to please and to astonish the imagination. The other passage is taken from Carthon, where Fingal describing the desolation of Balclutha in the way of episode, concludes the mournful narration with the following affecting and sublime reflection. "Why dost thou build the hall son of the winged days? Thou lookest from thy towers to day; yet a few years, and the blast of the desert comes; it howls in thy empty court, and whistles round thy half worn shield†." The above

* Vol. i. p. 77.

† Page 186.

striking and beautiful sentiment is the natural dictate of that contemplative disposition, united with that sublime melancholy which distinguishes every great Genius, and which seems so remarkably to have distinguished the character of Ossian.

That this Poet possesses the talent of raising to a great degree both the tender and more violent passions of the mind by his sentiments as well as descriptions, will not be questioned by those persons who are themselves possessed of the smallest share of sensibility, and have read his poems with any measure of attention. These indeed are almost constantly addressed to the affections and to the heart, over which he maintains an absolute and uncontrouled power. I shall content myself with quoting a few examples of pathetic sentiment, not thinking it necessary to adduce many in proof of a point so palpably evident.

Our sympathy is strongly excited in favour of the amiable, brave and generous

Carthon, who had fallen by the hand of his unknown father. Thus he addresses his dying words to Fingal. "King of Morven, Carthon said, I fall in the midst of my course. A foreign tomb receives in youth the last of Reuthamir's race. Darkness dwells in Balclutha; and the shadows of grief in Crathmo.—But raise my remembrance on the banks of Lora, where my fathers dwelt. Perhaps the husband of Moina will mourn over his fallen Carthon*." In this passage the very circumstances are touched on which are most powerful in exciting commiseration of his unhappy fate; his youth, his falling in an unknown land, in the beginning of his fame, his being the last of his race, and above all the affecting consideration of the husband of Moina lamenting his untimely death. The story of Armar, Arindal and Daura, as related in the songs of Selma by Armin the father of the two last, is deeply pathetic, particularly

* Vol. i. p. 198.

the description of Daura's situation, left abandoned on a desert rock by the traitor Erath, and uttering her unavailing cries for relief. The melancholy situation and employment of the unhappy father is represented in a very affecting view. "When the storms of the mountain come; when the north lifts the waves on high; I sit by the sounding shore and look on the fatal rock. Often by the setting moon I see the pale ghosts of my children. Half viewless they walk in mournful conference together. Will none of you speak in pity? They do not regard their father*." His imagining he "sees his children walking half viewless in mournful conference together by the setting moon," is a circumstance remarkably picturesque, as the concluding sentiment strongly indicates the grief and agitation of a troubled mind. To quote all the pathetic passages of Ossian, would almost be the same thing as to transcribe his poems: let it suffice to

* Vol. i. p. 302.

add one other example to those already adduced. After a very tender interview betwixt Cathmor and Sulmalla in the seventh book of Temora, just before the last decisive engagement, the lady, not being able to prevail with her lover to decline the battle, begs as her only consolation under the dreadful event of which she was afraid, that she may at times hear his voice after his death, in order to sooth the violence of her grief. "But if thou shouldest fall—I am in the land of strangers.—O! send thy voice from thy cloud, to the maid of Inishuna*."

Let us next consider Ossian's talent in description, which in a poet of a truly original Genius, we observed, will always be vivid and picturesque, and sometimes sublime or pathetic, as occasion may require. This mark of originality is found in the poems of Ossian in a very extraordinary degree. The speech of Cairbar's ghost deserves particular attention. He appears to his brother Cath-

mor, and, conformably to the opinion of the times, warns him of his approaching death. Cairbar after informing his brother of his own particular state, that he travelled on the wind, and that "his form was in his father's hall, like the gliding of a terrible light, which winds through the desert in a stormy night," an image by the way truly sublime, as well as picturesque, and happily adapted to express the condition of the cruel and gloomy Cairbar, intimates to him that his fate should be happier; doubtless upon account of the mildness and benevolence, as well as bravery of his character; and then all at once struck with the dreadful prefaces of Cathmor's death, which were at that moment presented to him, he instantly breaks off his speech to him, and with an unexpected and alarming abruptness addresses those awful visionary beings who intimated this dismal event by their portentous signs.—"The mournful sounds arise! On Lubar's field there is a voice!—Louder still ye shadowy ghosts! the dead were full

of fame. Shrilly swells the feeble sound!—
 The rougher blast alone is heard!—Ah soon
 is Cathmor low*! These solemn and super-
 natural harbingers of Cathmor's death bear
 some resemblance to the incantations of the
 witches in Macbeth, and to the awful den-
 unciations of the ghosts of those persons
 who had been murdered by Richard the
 Third, and who rose from their graves in
 order to foretel the doom of this bloody
 tyrant. The effects of the sound of Fingal's
 shield in the seventh book of Temora, when
 this hero himself had resolved to lead the
 battle, are described with a happy wildness
 and vivacity, as well as strength and subli-
 mity of fancy. "The king took his death-
 ful spear, and struck the deeply sounding
 shield, the shield that hung high in night,
 the dismal sign of war. Ghosts fled on every
 side, and rolled their gathered forms on the
 wind. Thrice from the winding vale arose
 the voices of death†." The circumstance
 of the ghosts flying away on every side, and

* Vol. ii p. 99.

† lb. 159.

rolling

rolling their gathered forms on the wind, as if terrified by the dreadful sound, is highly picturesque and very uncommon. Offian's address to the deceased bards his predecessors in the end of this book is so poetical, solemn, and strangely fanciful, that the reader will readily excuse my inserting it. "Ullin, Carril, and Ryno, voices of the days of old! Let me hear you in the darkness of Selma, and awake the soul of songs.—I hear you not, ye children of music. In what hall of the clouds is your rest? Do you touch the shadowy harp robed with morning mist, where the sun comes founding forth from his green headed waves?" I shall present the reader with only one other passage of this kind, so remarkable indeed, that I cannot resolve to omit it without any notice. It occurs in the last book of Temora, and contains a very sublime as well as vivid description of the king of Morven descending from his hill to battle, to "the last of his fields." Our idea of the majesty and terrible valour of this ancient hero is greatly heightened
by

by the previous representation which the poet gives of his appearance on the hill before his descent. He is seen "striding in the rolling of mist, greatly dim in all his arms." He appears like the god of war, enveloped in a cloud, which is sometimes partly blown away by the wind, thereby disclosing to view half his tremendous form. The appearance of Fingal, gradually emerging from the column of mist in which he was shrowded, till he stood displayed to the admiring host in all his majestic grandeur, is described in a manner so vivid and picturesque, that we almost fancy we see the august and stately form rising by just degrees to our astonished view. "Now is the coming forth of the king.—First appeared the sword of Lano; the spear half issuing from a cloud; the shield still dim in mist. But when the stride of the king came abroad, with all his grey dewy locks in the wind; then rose the shouts of his host over every moving tribe. They gathered gleaming

ing

ing round, with all their ecchoing shields.
 So rise the green seas round a spirit that
 comes down from the squally wind. The
 traveller hears the sound afar, and lifts his
 head over the rock. He looks on the
 troubled bay, and thinks he dimly sees the
 form*." The simile with which the de-
 scription concludes is remarkably sublime;
 and the Poet in the wildness and wanton-
 ness of his imagination has extended it much
 farther than he usually extends his simili-
 tudes, by the addition of circumstances
 which render the representation perfectly
 picturesque. The traveller's imagining he
 hears the sound afar; his raising his head
 above the rock, and peeping over it with
 cautious terror, and his fancying he dimly
 sees the dreadful form, are the fictions of a
 truly plastic Genius, and among the boldest
 and most exquisite strokes of descriptive
 poetry.

Of that irregular greatness, wildness and
 enthusiasm of imagination which we ob-

* Vol. ii. p. 184.

served to distinguish exalted and original Genius in poetry*, we might adduce many examples from the poems of Ossian; but we think it altogether unnecessary. Instead therefore of selecting and illustrating more passages of these poems, we shall only refer the reader to the description of the combat betwixt Fingal and the spirit of Loda in Carrickthura, in which all the above mentioned qualities are united in a degree too extraordinary, and whose merit is too obvious to require a comment.

We shewed in the last place, that original Poetic Genius, will naturally display itself in allegories, visions, or some species of fabulous composition†. The invention of such fabulous incidents and characters as we meet with in the Iliad or Odyssey we have already shewn was incompatible with the state of society in which Ossian lived, and with the design of his compositions. But, though Ossian neither did, nor in his

* Book ii. sect. 3.

† Ibid.

situation

situation could invent such a variety of incidents and of human characters essentially distinguished from each other as Homer has exhibited, in an age and country where the pursuits of men were so uniform; not to mention, that to invent incidents was contrary to his views, (which were to celebrate the praises of real, not fictitious heroes) yet has he displayed the force of his Genius in one species of fiction the most difficult of all others, and that is in the creation of ideal and supernatural beings; in assigning an existence and offices, in appropriating speech and action to ghosts and spirits, of which we have already had occasion to give several examples. In this kind of fabulous composition, the only one suitable to the age in which he lived, Ossian is without a superior, and, if we except Shakespeare, without an equal, and without a rival.

S E C T. III.

O F S H A K E S P E A R E.

HAVING endeavoured, as far as the limited nature of our plan would allow, to point out and to exemplify the distinguishing characters of original Genius as they appear in Homer and Ossian, we shall next proceed to consider the merits of Shakespeare.

As the Genius of this extraordinary person was perfectly excentric and irregular, and his excellencies are of a very peeuhiar kind, it is indeed scarce possible to give a complete view of his character as a poet, without entering into a more minute examination of his writings than this essay will admit of. We must content ourselves therefore at present with giving a sketch and marking the outlines of it; in doing of which we shall endeavour to hit some of the distinguishing features, proceeding

proceeding in this attempt in the manner above prescribed and observed. His talent in the invention of incidents therefore is first to be considered by us.

Were we to estimate the Genius of Shakespear by the number of incidents which he has really invented, we should not be apt to rank him among the most complete originals; nor could he bear to stand in competition with Homer, or even with poets of far inferior merit. But we ought not to form our opinion of his abilities in this way, by what he hath actually performed (otherwise we shall be ready to entertain a very inadequate idea of his excellence) but on what we have reason to think, from a view of the extent of his Genius, displayed in a higher species of *invention*, he could have performed, had he chosen to employ the powers of his mind in the manner above mentioned.

We have already allowed that the invention of a variety of new and surprizing incidents is an indication of the exertion of

original Genius in a very considerable degree*, but we have also shewn that the invention, and just exhibition of supernatural characters in particular, is a certain proof of a still higher exertion of this quality. If Shakespeare therefore excelled in the last more difficult effort of Genius, he might doubtless have excelled in the first, if he had thought it proper to have attempted it. The highest degrees of originality may be discovered where few or no incidents are invented, as we have seen in the case of Ossian; but where no new characters, no supernatural or ideal beings are introduced, its highest degrees cannot exist. A poet possessed of the most sublime and extensive original Genius, finding either in the records of history, the traditions of his country, or the events of his own times incidents great and surprizing enough to captivate the imagination, will sometimes rest satisfied with these (without giving himself the trouble to

* Book ii. sect. 3.

invent others,) and think only of displaying them to the utmost advantage in poetry. Thus Ossian, desirous of celebrating the most distinguished heroes of his own age, and especially such as had arisen in his own family, was obliged to confine himself to the representation of real facts; though, happily for the poet, these were in themselves so important and uncommon as to raise the admiration of his countrymen, or they were rendered such by the strong colouring of an ardent imagination. Shakespeare, on the other hand, acquainted with a much greater variety of surprizing events collected from history and tradition, set himself to work up an affecting representation of these in the drama, not thinking it necessary for the most part to invent others, as the incidents he had acquired in the manner above mentioned were in general very much adapted to please and to astonish the mind. In the exhibition of supernatural and ideal characters however the case is far otherwise. In this sphere a great Genius, as we have already observed,

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delights

delights to range. It is not satisfied with adopting such characters from others; but must create for itself. By this means the imagination is fully gratified in its passion for the marvelous, at the same time that its powers are exercised to a much greater extent, and expatiate with more unbounded liberty in the invention of those ideal characters, than in the invention of any incidents whatever. We need not therefore be surprized to find that the compositions both of Ossian and Shakespeare are more distinguished by the former than by the latter. After all, Shakespeare hath shewn in two of his plays, remarkable for a wildness of fiction, that he could invent incidents as well as characters, whenever he thought proper to employ his creative Genius in this manner. The plays we have in our eye are the Tempest and Midsummer Night's Dream. In these inimitable productions most of the events at least, and especially such as are any way extraordinary, are the invention of the poet; but as the invention of

of incidents of any kind constitutes the least part of Shakespeare's merit, we shall dismiss this article without any farther observations, and make some remarks upon those wonderful and supernatural characters which he has invented and displayed by the sole power of his own prolific Genius.

The character of Caliban in the *Tempest* is universally acknowledged to be an original one. Neither history, tradition, nor the most extensive acquaintance with human life, could so much as have afforded Shakespeare the least glimmering of such a character. It was the pure creation of his own mind. This monster the Poet has, with great propriety, supposed to be engendered by a witch of the most malevolent, ugly and abhorred kind; and we are led to imagine that he was begotten by some hateful daemon, a proper mate for such an infernal hag. Caliban possesses all that savage ferocity of manners, that brutality of disposition, that waywardness of temper which chastisement only can reduce to submission,

and that insensibility of every humane and benevolent affection which we can conceive suitable to such a detestable progeny. Yet the bad qualities by which this monster is distinguished have nothing similar in their form to the same qualities as they appear in life. There are monsters in human nature, but they are not Calybans. The observation therefore which that ingenious and amiable nobleman, my lord Falkland, is said to have made on this character of Shakspeare's, that it was not only a new one, but that the poet had contrived a new kind of language entirely adapted to it, was perfectly just, as will appear from a few quotations. Being called by Prospero to do some servile office to which he was reluctant, he utters the following strange imprecations upon this magician and his daughter, as soon as he comes into their presence.

As wicked dew as e'er my mother brush'd
 With raven's feather from unwholsome fen,
 Drop on you both!

Act i. scene 4.

And

And a little after, still speaking conformably to the incorrigible and obdurate malevolence of his character, he adds,

All the charms

Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats light on you.

There is great propriety in making him utter curses that alluded to the offices and incantations of his mother, curses that could only have come from the progeny of such a parent. The services that he professes to Stephano and Trinculo after he had tasted their wine are likewise perfectly suitable to such a savage.

I pry'thee let me bring thee where crabs grow,
And I with my long nails will dig thee pignuts;
Shew thee a jay's nest, and instruct thee how
To snare the nimble marmazet; I'll bring thee
To clustering filberds; and sometimes I'll get thee
Young sea-malls from the rock. Act ii. scene 3.

We might adduce many other speeches of Caliban highly characteristical; but as the whole play in which they are contained hath been criticised to excellent purpose

by the adventurer * we forbear to quote them here. For the same reason we pass over the character of Ariel in this play, with observing in general, that in the representation which Shakespeare has given of the nature and employment of this wonderful visionary being, who is said

To dive into the fire ; to ride
On the curl'd clouds ;
To do business in the veins o'th'earth
When it is bak'd with frost.

“ To fly on a bat's back, and to lie in the bell of a cowslip”, he hath discovered the most astonishing fertility, wildness and luxuriance of imagination.

The other ideal characters of Shakespeare, such as fairies, witches and ghosts, claim our next attention. Caliban and Ariel are completely original characters, since popular tradition never so much as assigned an existence to such beings. Vulgar opinion and tradition however had attributed an

existence as well as certain indistinct properties to ghosts, witches and fairies, before the time of Shakespeare; but to him and Ossian we are indebted for a particular and striking display of the nature and qualities of the first, and to Shakespeare alone for the most picturesque representation of the characters and occupations of the two last. Let us consider the ideas he has given us of those visionary beings.

The majestic appearance of the ghost in the first act of Hamlet; the strangeness, the importance, and the solemnity of his relation, all of them so exactly suitable to the demeanour we are apt to conceive of, and to the discoveries which we are ready to expect from spiritual beings released from the confinement of the body, are such as must alarm the imagination of every reader who is susceptible of feeling, as well as overwhelm his faculties with an awe and dread, similar to that which the presence of such a being would naturally inspire. We may add that the attitude and action

of the ghost before he begins his relation, and his calling upon Hamlet to "mark" him, raise our expectations to the utmost, and prepare us for the surprizing discovery which follows.

I am thy father's spirit ;
 Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,
 And for the day confin'd to fast in fires ;
 Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
 Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid
 To tell the secrets of my prison house,
 I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word
 Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
 Make thy two eyes like stars start from their spheres,
 Thy knotty and combined locks to part,
 And each particular hair to stand on end,
 Like quills upon the fretful porcupine :
 But this eternal blazon must not be
 To ears of flesh and blood, Act i. scene 8.

Shakespeare may likewise be said to have invented a certain kind of language for his ghosts, since it is suitable to no other beings but these, to whom indeed it is strictly appropriated. The above passage affords a striking example of this. It may be farther
 remarked

remarked, that the very appearance and motion of Shakespeare's ghosts are characteristic of nature. Observe the effect of the appearance of Banquo's ghost upon Macbeth. This usurper having invited the nobility to an entertainment, and preparing to take his seat at the table, perceives that his place is filled up by the ghost of Banquo, whom he had caused to be murdered. Struck with horror at the sight, and convicted of guilt, yet desirous to exculpate himself, he exclaims in the agony of a distracted and troubled mind.

Thou canst not say I did it, never shake

Thy goary locks at me. Mac. Act iii. scene 5.

If we reflect that Macbeth began by this time to feel the tortures of an awakened conscience, upon account of the murder of Duncan and of Banquo, the terror which he discovers at the appearance of the ghost of the latter, who seems to shake his hair clotted with blood, in token of his accusing him of the murder, will appear perfectly natural.

To

To these we may join the alarming intimations of the ghosts of those persons who had been murdered by Richard the Third, and who appeared to him in a dream the night before the battle of Bosworth, in order to foretel its unfortunate issue to him. Thus the ghost of Prince Edward the son of Henry the Sixth speaks :

Let me sit heavy on thy soul to-morrow.

Think how thou stab'd'st me in the prime of youth
At Tewksbury ; therefore despair and die.

Rich. 3. Act v. scene v.

The denunciations of the other ghosts are in the same spirit, and calculated to strike terror and despair to the heart of the guilty tyrant. The above examples will be sufficient to shew the dignity and propriety with which the ghosts of Shakespeare speak and act ; we shall select a few passages that may give an idea of the characters of his witches.

Hecate's speech to the other witches her ministers is particularly wild and fanciful. After having quarrell'd with them for daring to display the wonders of their art without her knowledge

knowledge or participation, she summons them to meet her next morning at the pit of Acheron, where she tells them Macbeth was to come to learn his destiny, and adds for her own part,

This night I'll spend
Unto a dismal fatal end.

Great business must be wrought ere noon.

Upon the corner of the moon

There hangs a vaporous drop profound;

I'll catch it e'er it come to ground;

And that distill'd by magic slights

Shall raise such artificial sprights,

As by the strength of their illusion

Shall draw him on to his confusion.

Act iii. scene 6.

One is amazed at the strangeness of the idea of a drop hanging on the corner of the moon, which, prepared by the magical chymistry of those weird sisters, should be powerful enough to raise apparitions that might by their influence drive Macbeth on to his destruction. Such an idea never entered, and perhaps never could enter into any imagination but that of Shakespeare. Hecate concludes

concludes her speech abruptly with a very picturesque and fanciful circumstance.

Hark, I am called † my little spirit, see,
Sits in the foggy cloud, and stays for me.

The fourth act of Macbeth opens with a scene calculated to produce an inexplicable kind of emotion, participating of dread and horror. It exhibits the witches in a dark cave marching round a burning cauldron, throwing in the ingredients of their charms, and pronouncing their infernal incantations. Let the following passage serve as a specimen of Shakespeare's talent in the representation of such characters. The third witch claiming her share in the enchantment in turn, thus speaks :

Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,
Witches mummy ; maw and gulf
Of the ravening salt sea shark ;
Root of hemlock digg'd i'th' dark ;
Liver of blaspheming Jew ;
Gall of goat, and slips of yew,
Silver'd in the moon's eclipse ;
Nose of Turk, and Tartar's lips ;

Finger

Finger of birth strangled babe,
Ditch deliver'd by a drab,
Make the gruel thick and slab.
Add thereto a tyger's chawdron,
For th' ingredients of our cauldron.

Then all of them join in confirming their incantations by one horrible chorus.

Double, double, toil and trouble
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

The second witch suggests the last expedient for rendering the enchantment complete.*

Cool it with a baboon's blood,
Then the charm is firm and good.

Such ingredients, and such a composition, we are persuaded no man ever heard of before; but the Genius of Shakespeare delighted in the most uncommon and astonishing combinations of ideas, and it never appears with so much strength and advantage as when he bursts into the ideal world, and presents to our view the characters and offices of supernatural beings; in which highest exertion

exertion of Genius he hath in most instances indeed never been equalled*.

The last sort of ideal characters to be considered by us is the fairy species, in the description of which Shakespeare hath given full scope to the exuberance of his creative Genius. Puck, in the beginning of the second act of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, meeting another of the fairy tribe

* The reader will probably be of opinion, that by what we have said of Ossian in the end of the preceeding section, we have put him upon a level with Shakespeare in the exhibition of one species of supernatural characters, which is that of ghosts. The truth is, if Shakespeare was ever equalled in such representations, it was by Ossian, and by him alone. But it must be observed that Shakespeare excelled in the representation of other supernatural characters, in which he stands altogether unrivalled. Whether he may not partly have derived this singular felicity from his particular situation, and especially from the aid of tradition in some instances at least, as well as from the astonishing strength of his own Genius, perhaps may admit of a question.

asks

asks him whither he wandered? to which
he replies,

Over hill, over dale,
Through bush, through briar,
Over park, over pale,
Through flood, through fire,
I do wander every where,
Swifter than the moon's sphere;
And I serve the fairy queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green;
The cowslips tall her pensioners be,
In their gold coats spots you see,
Those be rubies, fairy favours,
In those freckles live their favours:
I must go seek some dew drops here and there,
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.

Every reader must observe that the above description which the fairy gives of his employment is distinguished by its vivacity and wildness. The lightness and volatility of these visionary beings seems to be imitated in the quick returns, and (if we may use the expression) brisk boundings of the verse.

How strangely picturesque and original
is the description of the employments en-
joined

joined by Titania to her fairies, in the third scene of the third act?

Be kind and courteous to this gentleman,
Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes,
Feed him with apricots and dew-berries,
With purple grapes, green figs and mulberries;
The honey bags steal from the humble bees,
And for night tapers crop their waxen thighs,
And light them at the fry glow-worms eyes,
To have my love to bed, and to arise:
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies,
To fan the moon-beams from his sleeping eyes.

We observed in the section on original Poetic Genius in a preceding work, that wildness of description was the pastime of a great Genius. In the above passage the imagination of Shakespeare seems to wanton and sport in exuberance. Who but this author ever thought of such fairy courtesies as stealing the honey bags from the bees, cropping their waxen thighs to make tapers, lighting them at the glow-worm's eyes, and plucking the wings of butterflies, to fan the moon beams from the eyes of one asleep?

These

These employments, so fanciful and so wild, are however at the same time perfectly apposite to the imagined nature and qualities of the fairy species.

These few examples will be sufficient to give us an idea of Shakespeare's creative Genius, discovered in the invention and exhibition of supernatural characters. We altogether omit the consideration of his great merit in the just representation of human characters, because, though in his management of these he has discovered a surprising degree of originality, it is in the display of ideal characters alone that he has discovered the full force of his Genius.

We shall next consider Shakespeare's talent in the invention and adaption of the images of Poetry.

A tragic Poet is not allowed to use the ornament of imagery so frequently as other classes of Poets, because his principal object is not to produce admiration, but to excite terror and pity. Images therefore ought never to be introduced in tragedy

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when the affections are wrought up to a high pitch or motion; for then they have a bad effect, by contributing to break, or at least to divert the tide of passion. Though Shakspeare has in several instances violated this rule, by admitting affected metaphors and similitudes, very much out of time and place, yet for the most part he has used them with great propriety, efficacy and beauty. Let us adduce a few examples. The following image is remarkable for its justness, elegance, and resemblance in every point of similitude to the object with which it is compared.

The charm dissolves apace,
And as the morning steals upon the night,
Melting the darkness, so their rising senses
Begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle
Their clearer reason. Tempest, Act v. scene 3.

In the fourth scene of the third act of Richard the Second we have an image highly beautiful in itself, containing an important moral, and naturally arising from the

the preceding reflections on mortality, which
it serves to set in a more affecting light:

For within the hollow crown,

That rounds the mortal temples of a king,

Keeps Death his court, and there the antic sits

Scorning his state and grining at his pomp;

Allowing him a breath, a little scene

To monarchize, be fear'd and kill with looks;

Infusing him with self and vain conceit,

As if this flesh which walls about our life

Were brass impregnable: and humour'd thus,

Comes at the last, and with a little pin

Bores through his castle walls, and farewell king!

The sentiment is likewise rendered more
pathetic by the image in a speech of Henry
the Sixth to the Duke of Gloucester, to
whom he intimates a suspicion of his hav-
ing come with a design to murder him.

The bird that hath been limed in a bush,

With trembling wings misdoubteth every bush;

And I the hapless male to one sweet bird,

Have now the fatal object in my eye,

Where my poor young was lim'd, was caught and
and kill'd.

Third part of Hen. VI. Act v. scene 7.

In the following passage the description is rendered truly sublime and picturesque by the image which conveys it. Thus Timon advises Alcibiades.

Be as a planetary plague, when Jove
Will o'er some high vic'd city hang his poison
In the sick air:

Our sympathy for the wretched though worthless Cleopatra is strongly excited by a single image alluding to the manner of her death.

Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,
That sucks the nurse asleep?

Ant. and Cleop. Act v. scene 5.

The beauty of an image sometimes depends upon a contrariety of effect in the object with which it is compared, when there is at the same time a resemblance in some of the essential particulars. The above passage affords an example of this, as it is the contrast betwixt the effects of suckling a child, and the effects of the asp's sucking the vital blood, which renders the image peculiarly affecting. In the passage quoted be-

low, the reader will observe that the sentiment receives an additional dignity from the image in which it is conveyed. Patroclus exhorting Achilles to resume his valour, thus expresses his importunate request.

O rouse yourself ! and the weak wanton Cupid
Shall from your neck unloose his am'rous fold,
And like a dew-drop from the lion's mane
Be shook to air. Troil. and Cress. Act iii scene 8.

The next image we shall adduce is particularly distinguished by its propriety and beauty. Laertes having given some prudent cautions to his sister Ophelia with regard to the conduct she should observe towards Hamlet, adds,

Virtue itself escapes not calumnious strokes ;
The canker galls the infants of the spring,
Too oft before their buttons be disclos'd ;
And in the morn and liquid dew of youth,
Contagious blastments are most imminent.

Hamlet Act i scene 5.

In the following passage, which exhibits a series of beautiful metaphors rather than any formed comparison, the sentiment de-

rives all its tenderness and passion from the figurative language in which it is expressed: Romeo having descended into the vault to take a last farewell of, and to die with his wife Juliet, whom, though only in a deep sleep by a powerful opiate administered by the friar, he believed to be dead, upon observing a vivid bloom in her countenance, which he supposed death had not yet soiled, thus addresses her, to all other appearance lifeless.

Oh my love! my wife!

Death that hath suck'd the honey of thy breath,
Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty;
Thou art not conquer'd, beauty's ensign yet
Is crimson in thy lips, and in thy cheeks,
And death's pale flag is not advanced there.

Rom. and Jul. Act v. scene 4.

Shakespeare has likewise discovered the fertility of his imagination in the invention of sentiments suitable to the subject, and to the occasion on which they are uttered. We are to adduce some of these that are sublime

or

or pathetic, as being most remarkably characteristical of exalted Genius.

We have a sublime sentiment clothed in fine and apposite imagery in a speech of Isabella to Angelo, who had sentenced her brother to death.

Merciful sweet Heaven,

Thou rather with thy sharp and sulphurous bolt
Splitt'st th' unwedgeable and gnarled oak,
Than the soft myrtle: O but man! proud man,
Drest in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assur'd,
(His glassy essence) like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high Heaven,
As makes the angels weep.

Measure for Measure, Act ii. scene 7.

We meet with another example of true sublimity of sentiment expressed in language remarkably nervous and picturesque, in the same play, in which we found the former Isabella endeavouring to fortify her brother Claudio against the fear of death, by shewing him it was not so dreadful as he was apt to imagine; he replies,

Ay but to die, and go we know not where;
 To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;
 This sensible warm motion to become
 A kneaded clod; and the dilated spirit
 To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
 In thrilling regions of thick ribbed ice;
 To be imprisoned in the viewless winds,
 And blown with restless violence round about
 The pendant world.—Tis too horrible!

Measure for Measure, Act iii. scene 2.

Prospero upon the sudden evanescence of the
 apparitions he had presented to Ferdinand
 and Miranda, passes by a striking transition,
 from the consideration of this fleeting scene,
 to a sublime and affecting reflection on the
 end of all things, in a passage too well
 known, and too justly admired, to stand in
 need of a comment.

These our actors,
 As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
 Are melted into air, into thin air;
 And like the baseless fabric of their vision,
 The cloud cap towers, the gorgeous palaces,
 The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
 Yea all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
 And like this unsubstantial pageant, faded,
 Leave not a track behind. Tempest, Act iv. scene 4.

To

To these examples we shall subjoin the reflection of Cardinal Wolsey on his disgrace, which is distinguished by the sublimity of the sentiment as well as by the beauty of the imagery with which it is adorned.

Farewel, a long farewell to all my greatness!

This is the state of man; to day he puts forth

The tender leaves of hope, to-morrow blossoms,

And bears his blushing honours thick upon him;

The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,

And when he thinks, good easy man, full surely

His greatness is a ripening, nips the root,

And then he falls as I do.

Hen. VIII. Act iii. scene 6.

Let us next adduce some examples of pathetic sentiment. No Poet ever knew better how to penetrate and to melt the heart than Shakespeare. A few passages culled out from his writings will convince us of his power over the passions. Queen Margaret and her son prince Edward having been taken prisoners after the battle of Tewksbury; and the latter having been slain by the usurper Edward, and his brothers Clarence

Clarence and Glocester, in his mother's presence, the unhappy queen addresses a speech to her dead son, and to his murderers; animated with those abrupt and violent workings of passion which we may suppose naturally to have arisen in her mind upon such a dreadful occasion. The tender, but strong affections of the mother first discover themselves.

Oh Ned! sweet Ned! speak to thy mother boy.
Canst thou not speak?

This is the language of nature. The first transport of grief allows her not time to reflect that he is dead, or to brand his murderers with the crime which they had committed. She utters her first sentiments in short exclamations to her son; but receiving no answer, she as naturally vents the rage of her passion upon the perpetrators of the horrid deed, who were standing before her.

O traitors! murderers!

They that stab'd Cæsar shed no blood at all,
Did not offend, and were not worthy blame;

If

If this foul deed were by to equal it,
 He was a man, this in respect a child,
 Butchers and villains, bloody cannibals,
 How sweet a plant have you untimely cropt?
 Have you no children butchers? if you had,
 The thought of them would have stir'd up remorse;
 But if you ever chance to have a child,
 Look, in his youth to have him so cut off,
 As deathsmen you have rid this sweet young prince.

Third part of Hen. VI. Act v. scene 6.

The epithets she bestows on the murderers of Edward are strongly expressive of their aggravated guilt, and the question, "Have you no children butchers?" is peculiarly poignant and emphatical, as it serves at once to show the violence of queen Margaret's grief and rage, and to represent their crime as enormous in the highest degree, by intimating an impossibility of conceiving any persons who had ever felt the emotions of parental affection capable of committing it.

In the tragedy of Richard the third, the soliloquy of Edward's queen, after the murder of her children by their barbarous uncle, is full of the most melting tenderness, and

calculated

calculated to excite the most affecting commiseration of her deplorable calamity.

Ah my poor princes ! ah my tender babes !
 My unblown flowers, new appearing sweets !
 If yet your gentle souls fly in the air,
 And be not fixt in doom perpetual,
 Hover about me with your airy wings,
 And hear your mother's lamentation.

Act iv. scene 4.

Upon observing the ruffian who had perpetuated the murder come into her presence, her passion becomes more violent and outrageous, and she demands from the tyrant in the phrenzy of her grief her children, whom he had murdered.

Tell me thou villain, slave, where are my children?

Act iv. scene 5.

The sixth scene of the last act of Othello, presents us with a very strong conflict of opposite and contending passions. Love, jealousy and rage appear in their fiercest extremes. The Moor, abused by the wicked artifices of Iago, and from many concurring apparent proofs convinced of the infidelity of
 his

his wife, forms the desperate resolution of putting her to death with his own hands. The scene opens with exhibiting Othello entering the bed-chamber of Desdemona, with a sword in one hand and a candle in the other. We may suppose him approaching the bed where his wife lay asleep, with a trembling step, with glaring eyes, and with a countenance overspread with horror; then breaking out into the following soliloquy, in all the anguish of a troubled mind.

It is the cause! it is the cause, my soul!

Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars,

It is the cause!

Struck with her beauty and the whiteness of her skin, he resolves not to deface it by a wound, and not to use his sword as an instrument of her death.

— Yet I'll not shed her blood,

Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow,

And smooth as monumental alabaster.

[Lays down the sword.]

The

The sight of her beauty seems to have made some impression on his yielding heart, which began insensibly to soften into pity; but he instantly steels his breast against all the emotions of sympathy, and confirms himself in his dreadful purpose.

Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men.

The Moor being afterwards overcome for a little with returning fondness, owing to his having snatched a kiss, feels himself dissolved into tenderness, and almost forgets his horrid design.

O balmy breath! that dost almost persuade

Justice to break her sword.

In the following lines his love and cruelty appear united in their utmost extreames. He can neither restrain his tenderness, nor relent from his execrable purpose.

—— One more, one more;

Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,

And love thee after.—One more; that's the last.

So sweet was ne'er so fatal! I must weep,

But they are cruel tears.

The

The tumult, the torment, and the fury of Othello's mind, after he had perpetrated the horrid murder, and was convinced of the innocence of his wife, are conveyed to us in the language of the most impetuous and distracting passion, abandoned to the most dreadful despair. After having taken one last look of the fair innocent creature he had murdered, he gives way at once to the furious torrent of his passion; reflecting at one time on the consequences of his crime in being separated from Desdemona, which he considered as the highest aggravation of his punishment; at another time imploring the most dreadful vengeance on himself in the distraction of his grief.

— When we shall meet at compt,
 This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven,
 And fiends will snatch at it. Cold, cold, my girl?
 Even like thy chastity. Oh cursed slave!
 Whip me ye devils
 From the possession of this heavenly sight,
 Blow me about in winds, roast me in sulphur,
 Wash me in steep down gulphs of liquid fire.—
 Oh Desdemona! Desdemona! dead, dead, oh! oh!

This

This is the language of frantic despair, and is perfectly suitable to the state of mind in which we may suppose Othello to have been, who, after the conviction of his wife's innocence, must have experienced the most direful and cruel remorse upon account of the horrid deed he had perpetrated.

Shakespeare's talent in vivid picturesque and sublime description is not inferior to his talent in the invention of sublime and pathetic sentiments. We observed that the descriptions of a Poet possessed of truly original Genius, will always be remarkably vivid and picturesque, and that those of a poet possessed of the highest degrees of originality will likewise be sublime when propriety requires they should be so. A few examples will convince us that the descriptive composition of Shakespeare is distinguished by all these qualities.

Thus Ariel describes the effects of the storm which by Prospero's command he had raised.

Now

Now on the beak,
Now in the waste, the deck, in every cabin,
I flam'd amazeement.

— Jove's lightnings, the precursors

Of dreadful thunder-claps, more momentary
And sight outrunning were not.

Tempest, Act i. scene 3.

The astonishing effects of Prospero's magical power over the elements by the agency of his elves and spirits are exhibited with a wild and most picturesque sublimity of description.

Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves,
And ye that on the sands with printless foot
Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him
When he comes back; you demy puppets, that
By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,
Whereof the ewe not bites; and you whose pastime
Is to make midnight mushrooms; that rejoice
To hear the solemn curfew; by whose aid,
(Weak ministers though ye be) I have bedimm'd
The noontide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,
And 'twixt the green sea and the azure vault
Set roaring war; to the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt: the strong bas'd promontory
Have I made shake, and by the speers pluck'd up

M

The

The pine and cedar; graves at my command
 Have wak'd their sleepers; op'd, and let them forth
 By my so potent art.

Act v. scene 2.

The speech of the Fairy queen to Oberon, in which she attributes the various calamities that befall unhappy mortals, as well as the brute creation, to their mutual jars, is altogether poetical and picturesque. As the whole speech is long, we shall only present the reader with a part of it.

And never since that middle summer's spring
 Met we on hill, in dale, forest or mead,
 By paved fountain, or by rushy brook,
 Or on the beachy margin of the sea,
 To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
 But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport.

Midsummer Nights Dream, Act ii. scene 2.

The following passage presents us with a strangely fanciful assemblage of ideas, exhibited in solemn, striking, and vivid description. Thus Puck speaks.

Now the hungry lion roars,
 And the wolf behowls the moon;
 Whilst the heavy plowman mores,

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All with weary task foredone.

Now the wasted brands do glow,

Whilst the screech-owl screeching loud,

Puts the wretch that lies in woe

In remembrance of a shroud.

Now it is the time of night

That the graves all gaping wide,

Every one lets forth his sprite,

In the church way paths to glide;

And ye Fairies that do run

By the triple Hecate's team,

From the presence of the sun,

Following darkness like a dream,

Now are frolick; not a mouse

Shall disturb this hallow'd house.

I am sent with broom before,

To sweep the dust behind the door.

Midsummer Night's Dream, Act v. scene 3.

This description is wild and irregular, but the objects represented in it are perfectly congenial to the occupations, time, and manner of appearance of the Fairy species with which they are connected.

We shall lay before the reader only one other example of Shakespeare's talent in description; an example that unites the sublime and picturesque in an uncommon

degree. Edgar having led Gloucester to the summit of Dover cliff, in order to take a leap from thence into the sea, addresses him in the following manner.

Come on, fir, here's the place—stand still. How fearful
And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!
The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
Shew scarce so gross as beetles. Half way down
Hangs one that gathers samphire; dreadful trade!
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.
The fishermen that walk upon the beach
Appear like mice; and yon tall anchoring bark
Diminish'd to her cock; her cock a buoy
Almost too small for sight. The murmuring surge,
That on the unnumber'd idle pebbles chafes,
Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,
Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight
Topple down headlong. Lear, Act iv. scene 6.

The reader will observe that this description is rendered remarkably picturesque by the lively representation of certain particular and striking objects, which would either have altogether escaped the view of a Poet of common Genius, or would have been but faintly portrayed in his draught.

An

An irregular greatness, wildness, and enthusiasm of imagination, were the last mentioned ingredients of an exalted and original Genius in Poetry. The compositions of Shakespear, beyond those of any other author, are distinguished by the above mentioned properties, to such a degree, that they may be said to constitute their ruling character. Most of the passages indeed we have already adduced are really examples of those qualities, though quoted for a different purpose. We shall select a few others however, peculiarly characterised by the properties in question.

Macbeth having formed the execrable design of murdering his sovereign, and waiting only the ringing of an alarm bell as a signal for perpetrating the horrid deed, breaks out into the following soliloquy, which is not only perfectly suited to the dreadful occasion, but is eminently distinguished by that irregular greatness, wildness, and enthusiasm of imagination, which we have shewn to be invariably characteristic

of the highest, degrees of *original* poetic
Genius.

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle tow'rd my hand?—come, let me clutch thee.
I have thee not; and yet I see thee still.
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling, as to sight? Or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?
I see thee yet in form as palpable
As this which now I draw.—
Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going,
And such an instrument I was to use,
Mine eyes are made the fools o' th' other senses,
Or else worth all the rest:—I see thee still,
And on thy blade and dudgeon, gouts of blood,
Which was not so before,—There's no such thing.—
It is the bloody business which informs
This to mine eyes.—Now o'er one half the world
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtain'd sleep; now witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecate's offerings, and wither'd murder
(Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,
Whose howl's his watch) thus with his stealthy pace,
With Tarquin's ravishing strides, tow'rd his design
Moves like a ghost.—Thou found and firm set earth
Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
Thy very stones prate of that we're about,

And

And take the present horror from the time
Which now suits with it.—Whilst I threat, he lives.—

[A bell rings.]

I go, and it is done; the bell invites me.

Hear it not Duncan, for it is a knell,

That summons thee to heaven, or to hell.

Macbeth: Act II. scene 2.

It is impossible to read this soliloquy without feeling an emotion of horror arising in our minds, which is greatly heightened by the circumstances of the aerial dagger with drops of blood upon it appearing to Macbeth, and pointing out to him the way he was to go. We can characterize this strangely horrific representation no way so properly as to say that it is irregularly great and wild, proceeding from a noble boldness and enthusiasm of imagination.

We meet with several other passages characterized by the same properties in *Romeo and Juliet*. The friar having told Juliet that he had thought of an expedient for preventing her marriage with Paris, if she had the resolution to submit to it, the lady answers.

O bid me leap, rather than marry Paris,
 From off the battlements of yonder tower;
 Or chain me to some steepy mountain's top,
 Where roaring bears and savage lions roam;
 Or shut me nightly in a charnel house,
 O'ercover'd quite with dead men's rattling bones,
 With reeky shanks and yellow chapless skulls;
 Or bid me go into a new made grave,
 And hide me with a dead man in his shroud;
 Things that to hear them nam'd have made me tremble;
 And I will do it without fear or doubt,
 To live an unflain'd wife to my sweet love.

Romeo and Juliet, Act IV, scene 1

This passage presents an assemblage of wild and frightful ideas to the imagination. "Reeky shanks and yellow chapless skulls," are very uncommon and picturesque epithets. It is by such epithets that the style of Shakespeare is distinguished from that of every other author.

We should extend this essay beyond all reasonable bounds did we select from the works of Shakespear all the passages which are distinguished by the above mention properties; let it suffice to adduce one other

other from the same play in which we found
the last. Romeo having descended into the
vault where Juliet lay, and beholding her
still lovely, though to appearance dead,
exclaims,

— Ah! dear Juliet,
Why art thou yet to fair? shall I believe
That unsubstantial death is amorous,

And that the lean abhorred monster keeps
Thee here in dark to be his paramour?

For fear of that I still will stay with thee.
And never from this palace of dim night

Depart again; here, here will I remain,
With worms that are my chamber maids; Oh! here

Will I set up my everlasting rest,
And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars

From this world weary'd flesh. Eyes look your last!
Arms take your last embrace, and lips, oh! you

The doors of breath seal with a righteous kiss,
A dateless bargain to engrossing death!

Come bitter conduct! come unfavoury guide!
Thou desp'rate pilot, now at once run on

The dashing rocks my sea sick weary bark!
Here's to my love! Oh true apothecary!

[Drinks the poison.
Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I die. [dies.]

Romeo and Juliet, Act v. scene 4.

There

There is certainly something wildly fanciful and irregularly great in the idea of Juliet's being mistress to grim and "unsubstantial death;" as well as in the resolution of Romeo to stay in the palace of "dim night," in order to guard her from the embraces of this "abhorred monster." The rest of this passage is in the same style, and is pathetic throughout. The latter part of it, containing the invocation to death, "Come bitter conduct, &c." has something in it uncommonly solemn.

It may be remembered that in the section on original Poetic Genius in a former work, we have showed in the last place, that a high degree of this talent will always discover itself in allegories, in visions, or in the invention and exhibition of ideal characters of one kind or another. That the very original Genius of Shakespeare hath most remarkably discovered itself in the last mentioned difficult species of exertion hath fully appeared from the view we have already taken of his ideal persons, such as

ghosts

ghosts, fairies and witches; which considered althogether, he has unquestionably exhibited with unequalled vivacity and strength of imagination*.

A celebrated writer of the present age, whose historical works in particular, are distinguished by a vivacity and spirit peculiar to himself, in attempting to give an idea of the English Genius and taste for dramatic Poetry, hath made some remarks upon a few passages he has selected from the writings of the great author of whom we have been treating, remarks, which at the same time that they indicate his ignorance of the English language, do no honour to his taste for the most exquisite beauties of Poetry. The intelligent reader will conceive that Voltaire is the writer I have just now in my eye. One cannot observe without a certain kind of indignant disdain the superiority in point of dramatic excellence, which he unjustly, we wish we could add ineffectually, assigns to Racine and Corneille over Shakspeare and Otway. The perverseness of taste discovered in this unreasonable preference is the more to be regretted as Voltaire is an author of great reputation, and as his opinions, though on some occasions sufficiently fantastical, are however deemed oracular by many persons, who either have not the capacity or the inclination to think for themselves;

Having classed Homer, Ossian, and

themselves; not to mention that his sentiments will be more generally imbibed than those of the most eminent author of any other nation, upon account of the more extensive prevalence of the French language. For the credit of Mr. Voltaire we are indeed willing to believe that several of the mistakes and misrepresentations with which he is chargeable, in exhibiting the sense of Shakespeare, are the effects of his being a foreigner not sufficiently acquainted with the idioms and peculiarities of the English tongue. The utmost stretch of charity and candour however cannot support this apology for all of them. In the censures which he has passed upon some of the quotations he has adduced from Hamlet, we must accuse him either of want of taste, or of prejudice, founded upon a blind and illeberal partiality to his own countrymen. The last of these causes indeed appears to have dictated his remarks upon the plan of Hamlet, over which he has thrown an air of ridicule, that neither the contrivance nor conduct of that admirable tragedy can give any suitable occasion for. In the observance of the unities of time and place we pretend not to compare Shakespeare with Racine or Corneille. Their superiority in these respects is manifest; and it may be acknowledged without any considerable diminution of the fame of the English Poet, as this kind of merit

Shakespeare together, as the only com-

merit may be acquired by a very moderate share of judgment, and without the least spark of Genius. The distinguishing excellencies of Shakespeare are quite of another kind. Though he has for the most part utterly neglected the unities of time and place, owing to inattention, to ignorance of the rules of the drama and of just criticism, and above all to the irregular boldness and irresistible impetuosity of his own Genius, which hurried him on in his career, without allowing him leisure to attend to the decisions of the cool contemplative critic; yet has he amply compensated for this neglect by those sallies and efforts of imagination which produce astonishment and transport. These striking beauties however Voltaire has either not discerned, or not acknowledged. It is impossible to read the flat and false translation which he presents us with of a part of the eighth scene of Hamlet, in which the ghost of that prince's father is introduced with such dignity and propriety, without dissatisfaction and disgust at so contemptible a copy of such an inimitable original. The advice of Horatio to Hamlet, in which he counsels him not to obey the signals of the ghost by following him, is thus debased by Voltaire's ludicrous translation of it. " Ah ! do not follow him, said his friend, he that follows a ghost is in danger of losing his senses."

The

plete original Geniuses in Poetry, whose

The passage to which this alludes is in the original highly poetical and proper.

What if it tempt you tow'rd the flood, my lord?
 Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff,
 That beetles o'er his base unto the sea;
 And there assume some other horrible form
 Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason,
 And draw you into madness? Think of it.
 The very place puts toys of desperation
 Without more motive into every brain
 That looks so many fathoms to the sea,
 And hears it roar beneath.

This representation of the consequences of following and holding a conference with a ghost is naturally dictated by that sudden dread which had seized the mind of Horatio on the appearance of the majestic ghost of the king. The awful and solemn dignity which distinguishes the information communicated by this spirit to Hamlet is almost quite lost in the translation of the French author. "The ghost informs him, says he, that he is in purgatory, and that he is going to relate to him things that will make his hair stand on end, like quills upon a porcupine. 'Tis thought, says he, that

productions have descended to our times,

that I died of the bite of a serpent in my garden; but the serpent is the man that wears my crown, it is my brother, and what is most horrible is, that he put me to death without my so much as receiving extreme unction; revenge me; farewell my son, glow-worms show that the morning approaches; farewell, remember me." A great part of the passage which Mr. Voltaire hath here so lamely translated we have already had occasion to quote and to illustrate; and we need only refer our readers to this and to the speech of the ghost, as it stands in the eighth scene of the first act of Hamlet, to be convinced what a falling off there is in the representation above given of the substance of this speech from the speech put in the mouth of the ghost by Shakespeare himself. Mr. Voltaire observes of the prayer of the usurper Claudius, which we have in the ninth scene of the third act, that it is not worth repeating. We are persuaded that no reader of sensibility and taste will be of this opinion. Those who are possessed of these qualities will perceive it animated with a variety of strong and conflicting passions. Terror, remorse, despair, desire and hope, discover themselves alternately in their natural symptoms, and are expressed in their proper language. The whole passage is too long to be inserted here; let
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I shall conclude this section with making

it suffice to quote the concluding lines as a specimen of the rest.

Oh wretched state ! Oh bosom black as death !
 Oh limed soul, that struggling to be free
 Art more engag'd ! help, angels make assay !
 Bend stubborn knees ; and heart, with strings of steel ;
 Be soft as sinews of the new born babe !
 All may be well. [*knels.*]

The following scene, which contains a soliloquy of Hamlet, wherein he deliberates concerning the expediency of putting the usurper to instant death, Mr. Voltaire has thought fit to sneer at, by observing, that " this likewise is a passage which Pope's commas direct us to admire. Notwithstanding the ridicule we may incur in Mr. Voltaire's opinion, we beg leave to admire with Mr. Pope ; and we doubt not that our readers who will peruse this soliloquy will find much more cause of admiration than of censure. Our author, after having given the history of the tragedy he criticizes, as well as adduced a few extracts miserably mangled and disguised in the translation, concludes, " This is the whole plan of the celebrated tragedy of Hamlet, the master-piece of the London theatre," adding with an air doubtless of confident superiority on the part
 of

a few observations on the comparative ex-

of the French tragedy, "Such is the work that is preferred to Cinna." We shall not here attempt to discuss the comparative merit of Shakespeare and Corneille. It is a sufficient honour for the latter to be ranked with the former. They both stand high in the scale of Genius, but their heights are very different. They both proceeded in their illustrious career with applause and success; but they proceeded "*haud passibus æquis*," with very unequal steps. We are sufficiently sensible that there is such a thing as a national prejudice and prepossession in favour of the most eminent Poets of one's own country, and that the English are as susceptible of it as any people in the world. This prepossession is in some degree natural to every one, and is not easily conquered. Mr. Voltaire himself, though he would pass upon the world for an impartial dispassionate observer, is not exempted from it. The essay upon the English theatre, to which is prefixed the fictitious name of Jerome Carre, affords a striking example of this. Nor should we have found any fault, though he and his countrymen had given Corneille the preference to Shakespeare as a poet; (for to use his own words, "Who can hinder a whole nation from liking a Poet of its own better than one of another country?" had

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cellencies, as well as the peculiar character

he not at the same time, actuated (partly we presume) by a national prejudice, given an unjust and very disadvantageous representation of one of Shakespeare's capital performances. Mr. Voltaire however imputing to the English a prejudice which he has himself so strongly discovered, is for "referring the matter in dispute between the stage of Paris and that of London to other nations; and invites all readers from Petersburg to Naples to decide the controversy. This appeal, were the English language as well understood throughout Europe as the French, we should not decline; nor should we be afraid of the judgment of men of taste and candour of whatever nation; but while the contrary is the case, we need not wonder if the greatest part of the foreign literati should entertain a disadvantageous idea of the merit of Shakespeare, conveyed through the medium of a false and prosaic, but plausible translation by so popular a writer as Mr. de Voltaire. This author has puzzled himself strangely with attempting to solve what he calls two important questions, of which after all he has given but a very indifferent solution. The first question with him is, "how so many wonderful things could be generated in one head alone?" The second is, "how audiences have been able to work themselves up to see these pieces with transport, and how they can still
be

of each, and on the different reception

be attended to in an age which has produced the *Cato* of Addison." With respect to the first he replies, "the wonder will cease entirely, when it is known Shakespeare has taken the subjects of all his tragedies from history or romances." One may ask by the way, how these things could be generated in Shakespeare's head if they are taken from history or romances. The inventive powers of this Poet, and the manner in which he has exerted them, have been already considered, so that nothing farther needs be added on this subject. His second question Mr. de Voltaire solves in the following manner. He tells us that "Chairmen, sailors, hackney-coachmen, prentice boys, butchers, and clerks, are passionately fond of fights; give them cock fights, bull fights, or prize fighters, buryings, duels, or executions, witchcraft and ghosts, and they crowd to the theatre; he adds, many a nobleman is as curious as the populace." This observation is unquestionably just, but it holds as true of the same classes of men in Paris as in London, and the French noblesse are perhaps as curious as the English peers. He farther observes, that "the citizens of London found in the tragedies of Shakespeare every thing that can please the curious." This sarcasm is levelled at the English nation in general, which he supposes to be directed in their taste for thea-

which those divine authors and their writ-

trical entertainments by the honourable fraternity above mentioned; and at the plays of Shakespeare, which he fancies to be calculated only to gratify such a fraternity. We should readily acknowledge the wit and poignancy of this stroke of satire, were the remark upon which it is founded really just. But because the mob who frequent the London theatre stare and are struck with the pomp of Shakespeare's machinery, and from a desire of seeing strange and terrible objects, are entertained by the appearances of his witches and ghosts; shall we for this reason conclude that the more rational admirers of Shakespeare are affected in the same manner, and captivated by the same means? As a certain proof that it is not the magnificence of the scenery or of the machines alone, in the tragedies of this great author, that affects such persons, we may observe, that we have seen those expedients for exciting admiration and terror practised by inferior writers without success. The more judicious and discerning part of his countrymen admire the justness and propriety of his sentiments, the vivacity of his descriptions, his natural display of human characters, the exuberance of his imagination, discovered in the invention and just exhibition of such as are supernatural, and bear witness to his irresistible power over the passions, by the tears they shed, and the emotions which they feel.

ings have met with in the world.

fecl. Mr. de Voltaire therefore very much mistakes the cause of that great reputation which Shakespeare has so deservedly acquired in his own country, when he affirms, that "a few strokes of Genius, and a few happy lines replete with nature and force, procured indulgence for the rest." There are not a few, but a great many striking passages in the writings of Shakespeare, that are infallible indications of the greatness of his Genius; and though there were no others than what we have already adduced, even these would be sufficient to shew that he possessed powers of imagination, superior to those of all the French Poets who have ever written. Our author seems to put in his claim for the thanks of the English, by telling us, that "he was the first who caused the names of Milton and Shakespeare to be known in France, about thirty years ago." We question it very much however, whether the English nation will think themselves greatly obliged to Mr. de Voltaire for the honour he has done to their last mentioned favourite poet. But our author has perhaps a little unwarily discovered this secret, since the being utter strangers to names which are immortal, and to writings which do honour to human Genius, reflects, we apprehend, very little credit on a nation which hath long valued itself on its politeness and cultivation of the liberal arts. After having made several other

With regard to Homer, it must be ac-

extracts both from Hamlet and Othello, which we forbear quoting, most of them with equal impartiality, and delivered his remarks upon them with equal taste and candour, he very gravely concludes, "The reader has it now in his power to decide the dispute for pre-eminence between the tragedies of London and Paris." In case any of Mr. de Voltaire's readers should be at a loss to conceive upon what premises he is to found his decision, we would refer him to the passages he has quoted from Shakespeare, and to what is still more convincing, his own authoritative testimony concerning their merit. To be serious: whenever the English language shall become as universally prevalent over Europe as the French, which we hope will one day happen, the excellence of the English Poetry will then be known, and the other nations of Europe will then, and probably not till then, have it in their power to decide the dispute for pre-eminence between the tragedies of London and Paris.

We have only to add, that we chose to make the above extracts from the English translation of Voltaire's works by Smollett and Franklyn, for the sake of such of our readers as may not understand the original French. To have quoted those passages in both languages would have rendered this note, already too long, insufferably tedious,

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acknowledged that he was endued by nature
 with an extent and a versatility of Genius,
 superior to that of any other Poet either an-
 cient or modern. This extent and versatility
 of mind qualified him almost equally to ex-
 cel in every species of invention; though he
 seems to have peculiarly excelled in the in-
 vention of incidents, of which we have a
 beautiful variety happily adapted to his pur-
 pose, both in the Illiad and Odyfsey; and
 in this particular exertion of Genius he
 certainly stands unequalled and unrivalled.
 In the invention and natural display of hu-
 man characters Shakespeare at least, if not
 Ossian, may claim a full equality, perhaps a
 superiority of merit; and in the just exhi-
 bition of such as are supernatural both
 Shakespeare and Ossian have an indisputable
 pre-eminence. In imagery and in sentiment,
 by which I would be principally understood
 to mean moral reflections on the various
 scenes of human life, and the vicissitudes of
 human affairs, Homer is certainly superior
 to Shakespeare, but in the last of these at
 least must yield to Ossian. The precedence

due to the Calidonian Bard in this respect must no doubt be partly attributed to the melancholy incidents of his life; but it ought to be principally attributed to the natural effusions of a sublime and contemplative mind. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that Homer hath in the *Odyssey* discovered a variety, a wildness, and a playful luxuriance of fancy, accompanied with rich and enchanting description which has never appeared in any other production in the same degree, except in the *Tempest* and the *Midsummer Night's Dream* of Shakespeare. In that solemn wildness of description indeed, which is so suitable to a great Genius addicted to contemplation, Ossian is inferior to none, but the sportive and wantonly wild graces of imagination he must be contented to give up to his illustrious rivals.

If I should be required to point out that single quality which appears most remarkably to predominate in the character of each of those divine bards respectively, I would say that sublimity, both in imagery and description, is most conspicuous in the character
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of Homer, that Ossian is most eminently distinguished by the pathetic both in sentiment and description, particularly that species of the pathetic which is calculated to melt the heart into tenderness; and that Shakespeare discovers the strength of his Genius most signally in a certain wild and picturesque manner of describing every object he intends to exhibit, which is indeed peculiar to himself. At the same time, it is certain that each of them possesses all these talents in a very high degree; though we may with great probability infer, that the peculiar quality which is most frequently and remarkably discovered in their respective writings, constitutes the predominant character of that Poet in whose writings it is found. Let it not however be supposed, that though I have considered sublimity as the distinguishing character of Homer, I mean to assign him the preference in this respect to Ossian. This point, to say the least of it, is extremely doubtful. For my own part, whatever censure or ridicule I may incur in the estimation of some, I do not hesitate to declare it

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as my opinion, that in sublimity of sentiment, Ossian's address to the moon in the poem intitled Carthon*, and in a certain wild and daring grandeur of description, the account which is given of the engagement of Fingal with the terrible spirit of Loda in Carrickthura†, is not excelled, indeed I think it not equalled by any passage of the like kind even in the immortal Illiad. Both Poets possess amazing sublimity, yet a difference may be remarked, says the author of the Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, in the species of this quality. As I knew not how to set this difference in so proper and striking a light as by using this author's words, I shall take the liberty to quote them. "Homer's sublimity, he observes, is accompanied with more impetuosity and fire; Ossian's with more of a solemn and awful grandeur. Homer hurries you along; Ossian elevates and fixes you in astonishment. Homer is more sublime in actions and bat-

* See Ossian's Works, vol i. p. 200, 201, Oct. edit.

† Vol. i. p. 277, 278, 279.

cles; Ossian in description and sentiment*." With regard to the pathetic, though both Homer and Shakespeare eminently excel in it, yet the former does not very often attempt it, whereas this quality is deeply imprinted on all Ossian's compositions, and unquestionably constitutes their ruling character.

In wild and picturesque description all the three are remarkably eminent; though this quality is certainly more conspicuous in the writings of Shakespeare than in any of the others, or than any other quality in his own; and therefore it may be justly considered as the distinguishing feature of his Genius. Indeed, in this high exertion of imagination, as well as in several others of a like kind, particularly in the creation and striking exhibition of ideal beings, Ossian and Shakespeare admit a nearer comparison, and bear a closer resemblance to each other than any two Poets I can remember. Still however it must be acknowledged, that in various wildness of

* Vol. ii. p. 252, 253.

description Shakespeare has the ascendant over all other Poets whatever. Ossian's description of the combat above mentioned betwixt Fingal and the spirit of Loda, I confess is equal to any of the most admired passages in the writings of the English Poet, and is marked at the same time with a degree of sublimity which perhaps renders it superior; but it ought to be remembered that Shakespeare abounds in wildness of fancy and description; and that though we cannot too much admire the fiction of Homer's representing Diomed as wounding the tremendous Mars, and making him fly bellowing to heaven, to which he ascends in a dusty whirlwind; and the battle betwixt the king of Morvan and the Scandinavian deity already referred to, wildness of description is Shakespeare's predominant character. In Homer and Ossian this quality breaks forth for the most part in sudden and interrupted flashes; but in Shakespeare it is one continued blaze, and shines forth with distinguished lustre in his *Tempest*, his *Midsummer*

summer Night's Dream, in Romeo and Juliet, in Hamlet, and in Macbeth. If we were to distinguish the different species of this quality, in which those divine bards severally excelled, I think we might observe that Homer in the *Odyſſey* discovers the wildneſs of his fancy in that kind of deſcription which wraps us in a pleaſing and enchanting delirium, of which we have fine examples in his representation of the grotto of Calypſo, the gardens of Alcinous, and the bower of Circe; that Oſſian mixes the ſolemn with the wild, and impreſſes our minds with awe at the ſame time that he overwhelms them with aſtoniſhment; and that Shakeſpeare's wildneſs is principally characterized by a certain ſportiveneneſs of fancy, which delights to riot and wanton in its own exuberance.

Thus we have exhibited thoſe great Geniuſes, to adopt the words of Fitzoſborne, "contending, as it were, for the prize of Poetry;" and that is certainly difficult, if
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not impossible, to determine to whom it ought in justice to be assigned. We leave it to the reader to draw what conclusion he pleases from the observations that have been made, or from his own, with regard to the comparative merit of those great Poets; for our part, *Non nobis est tantas componere lites*; and though a probable conjecture upon the point might perhaps be made, yet as in the present case, considering the difference in their situation, and in the subjects on which they wrote, certainly, we think cannot be obtained, we judge it more prudent to decline giving an opinion in this matter. We shall rather make some remarks on the particular situation of those celebrated authors, and on the reception which they and their writings have found in the world, circumstances which may have had a greater influence on their productions than on the first reflection we may be apt to imagine.

Though the Genius of those divine Poets was similar, their fate and fortunes were however very different. Homer indeed lived

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in a country which some ages after his time became the seat of liberty, of science and of art; but in the age of this Poet arts and sciences were yet in their infancy, and had only begun to dawn upon Greece. Yet, were there some circumstances in Homer's situation not a little favourable to his Genius and fame. He found a system of mythology invented to his hand, and sufficiently established; a system, ingenious in its structure and extremely suitable to his purpose. He has indeed made the happiest use of this mythology; for by interesting his gods in the events of the Trojan war, and assigning them different shares in accelerating or retarding those events, he has very much raised the grandeur and dignity of his action. Whatever merit Homer may have had, in the use he has made of the Greek theology, as he has unquestionably a great deal, it was certainly a peculiar felicity to have found a theological system, already invented and in repute, so admirably adapted to his design. This was a peculiar advantage in Homer's situation,

situation which no doubt had a very favourable influence on his Genius and compositions. He had likewise the happiness to live among a people in whom the rudiments of good taste were implanted in an uncommon degree, and in whom it had subsisted from the earliest ages. His Poetry was repeated and admired in all the cities of Greece, during his own life, and he had the good fortune to enjoy, while living, a share of that high reputation which his works have since so deservedly procured him. This was indeed a small share of reputation in comparison of what accrued to him in after-ages. That immortality and extent of fame, which many authors of real Genius have in vain aspired to, Homer hath secured to himself: his divine poems have been translated into the languages of all the civilized nations of the world, and have been universally admired wherever they have been received. Such have been the singular advantages and felicity of Homer.

Very

Very different has been the fate of Ossian ; his situation, indeed hath been peculiarly unfortunate. It was his misfortune to live in a bleak and barren country, and among an uncultivated and unpolished people. He too had his admirers. But what admirers ! A few ignorant and uncivilized chieftains, who were either the descendants or relations of his own family, or of those heroes, whose exploits he had celebrated in his poems ; and who perhaps valued his compositions, for no other reason than because they or their family relations were distinguished in them. His works, considering how little they were known, may be said to have been buried in obscurity and oblivion for many centuries : they were confined to a single corner of a remote country, and repeated in a language understood only in that corner ; where they might still have remained in their primæval obscurity, had not some fortunate accidents joined to the industry of the ingenious translator brought them to light. If however, from the merit

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of those works, we may be permitted to preface their future fame, we may without hesitation venture to affirm, that they will be read with admiration and delight, even in a translation, wherever the English language is known; and that their duration will be co-eval with the existence of sensibility and taste in Great Britain.

Shakespeare has been much happier in his fame than Ossian; but in this respect has been far inferior to Homer. His inferiority of reputation hath arisen more from the local prevalence of the English language, and the uncultivated taste of the age in which he lived, than from any real inferiority of merit. The age of queen Elizabeth, however justly renowned for the wisdom of her councils, and the terror of her arms, was certainly not the æra of correct and refined taste; and it may not be amiss to observe that the writings of Shakespeare, with all their uncommon excellence, have taken a strong tincture of the antithesis, the witticisms, and the rudeness of the times; a circumstance,

circumstances, which, if properly attended to, will account for, and extenuate the far greatest part of the blemishes which have been imputed to him. Want of learning; or rather knowledge of the learned languages, hath been considered by many as a great disadvantage to Shakespeare; but it should seem to have been very improperly considered as such. For my own part, I am persuaded, that had Shakespeare's learning been greater, his merit as a Poet had been less. Conscious of the greatness of his own powers, he had no occasion for the adventitious aid of books, and the observations of others. He had nothing to do but to look upon nature and man, and he, at one glance, caught a perfect idea of every object and character which he viewed, of which his imagination enabled him to present a complete resemblance; as well as by its creative power to present objects and characters which never existed in nature, nor in any human imagination but his own. A constant attendance to the rigid rules of

criticism would probably at least have damped the divine spirit which frequently breaks forth in his writings, and gives them their chief value. // However much we may condemn his faults, we are astonished and delighted with those Master-strokes of nature and character, which are the efforts, of the unaided strength of his own Genius.

The fame of Shakespear was neither in his own time, nor has been since, equal to his distinguished merit, though in the present age his writings are very generally admired: the reputation which these have already required is daily increasing, and will increase; and being so justly founded, we may be assured that it will be as permanent as great.

S E C-

S E C T. IV.

O F S P E N S E R.

THE age of Queen Elizabeth, so much distinguished by the able ministers and generals which adorned it, had likewise the honour to produce two very eminent Poets. These were Shakespeare and Spenser. The principal excellencies of the former, as far as they regard his originality of Genius, we have already pointed out in the order formerly prescribed; we shall next consider how far the same excellencies appear in the latter.

It may not be improper to premise what we have to say on the Poetic talents of Spenser, with observing, that the allegorical species of Poetry which he chiefly cultivated, is of all others the most difficult; and is indeed a species of composition in

which a middling writer can never succeed. In inventing the incidents and portraying the characters of allegorical Poetry, the imagination is wholly abstracted from the objects and events of real life; it derives all its materials from its own native fund it creates for itself. There is indeed no kind of writing which admits of so much latitude, and affords such ample scope for the exercise of an exuberant Genius, as that of allegory, which at the same time that it possesses the dignity of the epic fable and instructs as well as amuses the mind by a representation of fictitious actions, has likewise this advantage over it, as we have already observed in a preceding part of this essay, * that it is not restricted to that exact probability in the invention and arrangement of incidents which we require in a truly legitimate epic poem, in order to render it perfectly interesting as well as a just imitation of nature, in which excellences the

principal merit of this last will always be found to consist. Epic Poetry, in its strict and proper sense, is likewise essentially distinguished from that species of allegory which admits of the greatest extent, (and of it only let it be observed we are here speaking,) by a probability of character, as well as of incidents; for the great designs of the epopæa being to please, to instruct, and to interest or affect the mind, it is impossible that these ends should ever be attained without a natural and striking display of human characters, and a just representation of probable yet surprizing events. Where these rules are neglected in an epic poem, we peruse it with dissatisfaction and disappointment, if not with disgust. On the other hand, allegorical Poetry, proposing instruction and amusement as its sole ends, dispenses with that exact probability both in the contexture of incidents and exhibition of character which is requisite in the former case; for truth may be conveyed, as well as the imagination pleased and astonished,

nished, by a series of actions very improbable. Hence it is that the species of Poetry of which we are treating, hath in all ages claimed the privilege of inventing incidents which have no verisimilitude, and exhibiting characters which not only do not exist, but which cannot have any real existence; for the mind in this case being on its guard against deception, overlooks the literal and obvious sense of the representation, and seeks for a metaphorical and hidden meaning under the veil of pleasing and ingenious fiction; however it may be sometimes so much captivated during the relation, as to prevent its attending to this distinction.

Besides the difference already noted betwixt allegorical and epic Poetry, with regard to the probability of incidents and characters; a probability dispensed with in the former case, * but absolutely required

* The reader will please to observe, that though we do not consider the probability of incidents and characters themselves which are introduced into allegorical Poetry, as in any degree requisite; yet a probability of
manners

in the latter, we may farther observe that there is a material difference in the nature of the characters represented in those two distinct species of Poetry. In the epopæa the characters, whether divine or human, or of what nature soever, are either real, or may be supposed to be so : in allegory they are wholly metaphorical and ideal, and cannot possibly have any existence. They are conceptions of the mind, embodied as it were, and exhibited in substantial forms. Thus virtues and vices, habits and passions, natural and moral qualities, are personified in this kind of Poetry, and made to speak and act suitably to their respective natures. By this means, allegory acquires the dignity and importance of the epic action ; the

manners is notwithstanding essentially necessary ; that is, the manners must be suited and conformable to the supposed characters. For farther satisfaction on this subject, we refer him to the third section of the preceding book, towards the end, where the principal rules of allegorical Poetry are pointed out.

events

events related are aggrandized by the characters employed in effectuating them; curiosity is at once excited and gratified by the novelty and marvellousness of the objects presented to the imagination; and instruction is conveyed to the mind with greater efficacy as well as pleasure through the medium of poetic description, accompanied with the pompous narration and action of the epopæa.

Having made these introductory observations on allegorical as distinguished from what is properly called epic Poetry, we shall proceed to consider some of the principal incidents and characters in the *Fairy Queen* of Spenser, which is his capital performance, and is altogether allegorical, that we may see how far he has attained the main objects of that species of composition he attempted; a species, which if not the highest in dignity and usefulness, claims at least a secondary place to the epopæa, and requires equal if not superior powers of imagination.

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The Fairy Queen abounds with a great variety of surprizing incidents; though it must be confessed Spenser has pretty frequently imitated the Italian Poets, Ariosto and Tasso, particularly the first, in the contrivance and disposition of those incidents, as well as in the display of some of his characters; a few of which imitations we shall take occasion to point out in their proper place.

In the first canto of the first book, the Knight of the Red Cross, who appears as the champion of holiness, is represented as setting forth upon an expedition which he had undertaken with the approbation of the Fairy Queen, in order to rescue the parents of Una (or Truth) his mistress, who accompanies him, from the power of a dragon 'horrible and stern,' by whom they were shut up in a brazen castle. It is well contrived by the Poet, that in this expedition, Error, which he makes a hideous monster, half woman half serpent, should be the first enemy he is obliged to encounter, as being
equally

equally the foe of holinesses and truth. After having vanquished and slain this enemy, he is next seduced by the plausible tale of hypocrisy or deceit, whom the author calls Archimage, and who is a powerful magician. The knight listening to his lore, and having gone along with Una to his hermitage, this enchanter sends for a false dream to the cave of Morpheus, (in which contrivance the author seems to have had in his view the dream sent to the tent of Agamemnon in the *Iliad*,) and instructing it to personate Una, conveys to the mind of the knight injurious suspicions of the fidelity of his mistress, which creates to him the most exquisite vexation. In the following canto he is separated from her by the artifices of Archimage, who employs Dueſſa, a female character representing Falsehood, to effectuate this purpose, which he accomplishes by giving him ocular evidence of the infidelity of Dueſſa personating Una; who abandoned by her lover, experiences various vicissitudes of fortune. The knight in the mean time,

having

in the course of his adventures encountered and slain an allegorical hero named Sans Foy, obtains his mistress, who was no other than Dueffa, though she had now changed her appearance, and taken the name Fideffa. Towards the end of the second canto we have the story of Fradubio and his mistress, shut up in a tree by the wicked artifices of this witch, in revenge of the alienation of his affection for her upon the accidental discovery of her native deformity, an episode evidently borrowed from the myrtle from which the visionary form of Aronida issues, in the eighteenth book of the Jerusalem delivered. In the fourth canto, the knight is conducted by Dueffa to the house of Pride. The following one presents an astonishing display of our author's powers of imagination. He leads us into the infernal world, and exhibits Dueffa and old Night journeying to Hell in the chariot of the latter, and carrying along with them Sans Joy, wounded by the Red Cross Knight, in order to be cured

cured by Æsculapius. It is not improbable that our divine Milton had this journey in his eye in the sublime description which he gives of the flight of Satan through the regions of chaos and night. Una's reception among the satyrs wears a strong resemblance to Erminica's situation among the shepherds. The Knight of Holiness, having afterwards become the captive of a giant, is released by prince Arthur, by whom the giant is killed, and Dueffa stripped of her disguise. After an affecting interview with his mistress Una, at last restored to him, in which her innocence is fully manifested, he is with great propriety conducted by her to the house of Holiness, where he undergoes a severe course of discipline as preparatory to his conversion and final happiness; after which he enters upon his last adventure, kills the dragon, and rescues the parents of Una, to whom he is at last married. These are the chief incidents in the first book; the allegorical meaning of which incidents the reader will easily conceive.

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We shall just touch upon a few others of the most remarkable in the other books;

The second book is intended to shew the advantages and happiness attending temperance, of which vertue Sir Guyon is represented as the patron. The effects of sensual indulgence to excess are exemplified in the melancholy catastrophe of Mordant and Amavia*. Sir Guyons binding Furor in chains†, his passage over the Idle Lake, his resisting the allurements of Phædra, who represents immodest mirth‡, his visit to Mammon§, who attempts to inflame his desires with the view of his treasures, his success against the foes of Alma or Temperance||, and his final triumph over Aerasia or Sensual Pleasure**, are beautiful allegories, pregnant with the most useful and excellent morals. The last mentioned incident is indeed borrowed both from Homer and Tasso. Sir Guyon's throwing a net over Aerasia and her lover is precisely the story

* Book ii. cant. 1. † Cant. 4. ‡ Cant. 6.
§ Cant. 7. || Cant. 9. ** Cant. 12.

of Vulcan's catching Mars and Ventus in a golden net, which he had made for that purpose ; and the adventure of Sir Guyon and the Palmer against Aerasia is the copy of that of Charles and Ubald, in which they rescue Rinaldo from the enchantments of Armida, with this difference only, that Tasso hath contented himself with liberating Rinaldo from his captivity, whereas Spenser makes his hero, with the assistance of the Palmer, take Aerasia herself prisoner.

The third book presents us with the adventures of Britomartis, a female warrior, and the patron of chastity, setting out upon a romantic expedition in quest of her lover, whose image she had seen. Her adventure in the first canto with the six champions of the *Lady of Delight*, who is a contrast to Britomart, puts one in mind of some usages that prevailed in an Amazonian republic described by Ariosto, the members of which (if we remember rightly) subjected all the men who arrived among them to slavery, unless they performed certain uncommon
and

and difficult exploits; though the circumstances are considerably different. The relation which the famous magician Merlin gives to Britomart, respecting her future husband and progeny, is closely imitated from the predictions of the same magician to his female heroine Bradamante, who goes, as does Spencer's heroine, to consult him upon this subject. The Poet has interspersed some amazing episodes in this book, such as the birth of Belphebe and Amoret, and the gardens of Adonis, in which he has displayed great luxuriance and fertility of imagination. These last mentioned fictions are much in the spirit of Ovid. In the eleventh and twelfth Cantos of this book, Britomart undertakes and accomplishes the release of Amoret from the enchantments of Busirane, an exploit which likewise gives the author an opportunity of discovering the utmost exuberance of Genius, by raising a variety of apparitions and visionary scenes, which are presented in order to terrify this heroine, and divert her from the execution

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of her design. These are some of the most important and interesting incidents in the first three books. The most distinguishing incidents in the others are the combat betwixt Cambel and the three brothers for the love of Canauc, ended by the appearance of that beautiful machine of concord represented by Cambina with her magic wand and cup*; the exploits of Britomart†, the contention for the girdle of Florimel‡, the death of the giant Corflambo, killed by prince Arthur§, the loves of Scudamore and Amoret||, the marriage of the Thames and the Medway, a fine poetical episode**, and that of Marinel and Florimel††. Arthegal's fight with Radigund, and his voluntary subjection to her, seems to have been contrived in order to show the influence of female beauty in perverting justice. The visions of Britomartis, and her conquest of Radigund in the seventh canto, afford a pleasing variety of incidents; and this last mentioned

* Book iv. Cant. 3. † Cant. 4. ‡ Cant. 5. § Cant. 8.
 || Cant. 10. ** Cant. 11. †† Cant. 12.

exploit is with great propriety assigned to Britomart, who represents Chastity, and forms a contrast to Radigund. By the conquest of the Souldan, and driving his wife Adicia to despair, the author intends to shew the final triumph of justice over wrong. In the ninth canto, Talus the executioner of Arthegal or justice, catches Guile after various transformations, and the two knights, Arthur and Arthegal, are brought to the court of Mercilla, who represents queen Elizabeth, and witness the trial of Duessa, in whom the author evidently intends to characterize Mary queen of Scots. We are sorry to find that so admirable a Poet, and so amiable a man as Spenser seems to have been, should in this instance have imbibed the illiberal prejudices of his contemporaries and countrymen, against an unhappy queen, whose singular misfortunes, notwithstanding her crimes, ought to have excited sympathy even in the hearts of her enemies. It was certainly inexcusable in the Poet to represent a princess naturally endued

with many excellent qualities, however fatally perverted by the influence of persons possessed of worse dispositions than herself, by an allegorical character destitute of every good quality, and a compound of dissimulation, falsehood and sorcery. However much our author may, through a too servile adulation of his celebrated Gloriana, palliate her conduct in this infamous transaction with the mask of prudence and justice, the impartial and discerning part of mankind will easily see through the veil, and whatever punishment they may think the guilt of Mary had merited, they will detest the jealousy, perfidy and cruelty of her sister-queen in taking away her life. Prince Arthur's aiding Belge, and killing the great Geryoneo in the tenth and eleventh cantos, is a good political allegory, representing the assistance given by queen Elizabeth to the Netherlands against Spain, as Arthegal's killing Grantorto in the twelfth canto, and aiding Sir Bourbon, who had thrown away his shield (an allegorical representation of his apostacy) is another of the

the same kind, by which the author intends to represent Henry the fourth of France victorious over his enemies by the aid of Elizabeth.

The sixth and last book contains the exploits of Sir Calidore, the knight champion of Courtesy, who, animated with the true spirit of knight errantry, sets out in his career with a professed design of rescuing distressed damsels from the tyranny of their oppressors, and of searching out and killing the blatant beast, by which name the Poet, as would appear, intends to typify Calumny. In the course of this expedition we meet with several interesting incidents, such as Sir Calidore's critically saving the lady from the cruelty of Maleport, his victory over Cruder, and softening the haughtiness and pride of Briana*, his delivering Serena from the blatant beast†, the punishment of Turpine and of Mirabella for the disdain shown to her lovers‡, Calidore's reception among the shepherds, and his love of Pastorella§, the

* Cant. 1. † Cant. 3. ‡ Cant. 7. § Cant. 9.

dance of the graces to Colin's pipe, and the captivity of Pastorella*, her release from the courteous knight, the surprizing discovery of her parents, and, lastly, Sir Calidore's victory over the blatant beast, which he binds in chains. Besides these six books of the Fairy Queen, we have a fragment of another upon Mutability in two cantos, in which the author rises to a sublime strain of invention, by transforming the above mentioned quality into an allegorical person of the highest dignity, who disputes the sovereign dominion over the whole creation with Jupiter himself, till dame Nature, appealed to as supreme arbitress in the contest, awards the rightful authority to Jupiter, foretelling the other that her empire should at last cease, and the time come when change should be no more. This variety of incidents, selected from the Fairy Queen, incidents which the nature of this essay allowed us only to mention, not to unfold, will be sufficient to convince those who have read that admirable work, of the

fertility of Spenser's imagination, discovered in the invention of these. We shall next consider how far he has displayed the same talent in a still more difficult species of invention, that of characters.

To exhibit just and striking characters of any kind, not copied from the life, must require a vigorous exertion of the powers of imagination, but to produce characters merely allegorical, and therefore the pure creation of the mind, not feebly delineated by a few general undistinguishing strokes, but strongly marked by the most vivid and discriminating features, and flushed with all the colours of nature and life must require the highest effort of true Genius. The perfection of this kind of characters consists in that picturesque representation of their distinguishing attributes which may render the several figures as it were visible to the eye, and communicate to them the life and action of real beings. Let us try some of the allegorical persons of Spenser by this rule.

In the fourth canto of the first book of

the Fairy Queen we have a description of the palace of Pride, and of the person, insignia and attendants of that goddess, drawn with the utmost strength and vivacity of imagination. Pride herself is seated in a splendid chariot, driven by six beasts of different kinds, on which are mounted the following persons, the inseparable concomitants and ministers of the goddess, Idleness, Gluttony, Lust, Avarice, Envy, and Wrath, all strongly characterised and properly distinguished from each other by their peculiar attributes. It is difficult to determine which of the portraits the Poet presents us with is the most striking and just; that of Envy however is certainly remarkably picturesque as well as natural.

St. 31.

And next to him malicious *Envy* rode
 Upon a ravenous wolf, and still did chaw
 Between his cankered teeth a venomous tode,
 That all the poison run about his jaw;
 But inwardly he chawed his own maw
 At neighbours wealth, that made him ever sad;
 For death it was when any good he saw,

And

And wept that cause of weeping none he had :
But when he heard of harm, he wexed wondrous glad.

32.

All in a kirtle of discolour'd say
He cloathed was, ypainted full of eyes ;
And in his bosom secretly there lay
An hateful snake, the which his tail upties
In many folds, and mortal sting implies.
Still as he rode he gnash'd his teeth to see
Those heaps of gold with griple covetise,
And grudged at the great felicity
Of proud Lucifera, and his own company.

32.

He hated all good works and vertuous deeds,
And him no less that any like did use ;
And who with gracious bread the hungry feeds,
His alms for want of faith he doth accuse ;
So every good to bad he doth abuse :
And eke the verse of famous Poets wit
He does backbite, and spiteful poison spues
From leproous mouth on all that ever writ :
Such one vile *Envy* was, that fifth in row did sit.

We have read many descriptions of the nature, qualities and attributes of *Envy* in the writings of other Poets, but we cannot recollect any so particular and vivid in all its circumstances as the one we have above quoted.

quoted. The reader cannot fail to observe the peculiar propriety of setting this allegorical person upon a wolf, of making him chew a tode, and nourish a snake in his bosom, actions strongly characteristical of the nature of that detestable passion they are intended to represent. The picture which the Poet presents us with of Wrath, is distinguished by a sublimity as well as vivacity of expression unattainable by an author of ordinary Genius.

33.

And him besides rides fierce revenging *Wrath*,
 Upon a lion, loth for to be led;
 And in his hand a burning brond he hath,
 The which he brandisheth about his head;
 His eyes did hurl forth sparkles fiery red,
 And stared stern on all that him beheld,
 As ashes pale of hue and seeming dead;
 And on his dagger still his hand he held,
 Trembling through hasty rage when choler in him swell'd.

34.

His ruffian raiment all was slain'd with blood.
 Satan very properly closes the rear of this
 goodly crew, over whom he has obtained an
 absolute

absolute authority, and whom he drives on to perdition.

36.

And after all upon the waggon beam
Rode *Satan*, with a smarting whip in hand,
With which he forward lash'd the lazy team,
So oft as *Sloth* still in the mire did stand.
Huge routs of people did about them band,
Shouting for joy; and still before their way
A foggy mist had cover'd all the land;
And underneath their feet all scatter'd lay
Dead skulls and bones of men, whose life had gone astray.

The figure and insignia of Despair in the ninth canto of this book are exhibited with great justness and strength of imagination; but we must content ourselves with referring the reader to the passage in which this allegorical person is introduced*. The tenth canto of the same book presents us with a variety of allegorical characters, most of them drawn with as much justness of judgment as force of imagination. Among these the venerable form of Contemplation deserves particu-

* St. 35.

lar notice, upon account of the very picturesque representation the Poet has given us of the appearance of this respectable person.

There they do find that godly aged fire,
 With snowy locks adown his shoulders shed,
 As hoary frost with spangles doth attire
 The mossy branches of an oak half dead.
 Each bone might through his body well be read,
 And every sinew seen through his long fast:
 For nought he car'd his carcase long unfed;
 His mind was full of spiritual repast,
 And pin'd his flesh to keep his body low and chaste.

In this canto however our author we think has unnecessarily multiplied his allegorical characters. He is so fond of allegorizing, that he has converted the different acts of Repentance into so many imaginary persons, with their proper attributes. Thus *Amendment* is armed with a pair of hot pincers to pluck off the rotten flesh; *Penance* with an iron whip to discipline the sinner, and *Remorse* with an awl to prick his heart, while *Repentance* plunges him in salt water to wash away his stains. These persons have either too little dignity for this kind of Poetry,

or

or are employed in offices which have a mean or ludicrous aspect in the eye of the reader. The same censure might no doubt be applied with still greater justice to some of the allegorical figures which he has exhibited in the ninth canto of the second book, where he represents Appetite, Diet, Concoction and Digestion as so many persons, qualities infinitely too low to admit of the pomp and dignity of personification; but Spenser has so seldom failed in this respect, that it were the petulence and fastidiousness of criticism to dwell upon such faults. Instead therefore of indulging a spirit of censure, for which there is so little occasion afforded, we shall refer the reader to some passages too long to be here inserted, that will give just foundation for the highest encomiums. The passages we have in our eye are those which characterize Mammon and his daughter Philotime in the seventh canto of the second book. Jealousy under the name of Malbuco in the ninth canto of the third book, Despair in the ninth canto of the first, and Slander in

in the eighth canto of the fourth book, where he will find those several passions with their peculiar attributes represented in their strongest and justest colours, embellished with the most exquisite graces of Poetry. To the examples above adduced of Spenser's talent in the invention and description of *allegorical* persons, we shall beg leave however to subjoin one other example of the same kind, as it presents to us a character drawn by the pencil of a master. It is that of Care in the fifth canto of the fourth book. In the following most picturesque manner his character, appearance and occupation are described.

St. 34.

There entering in, they found the good man's self,
 Fall busily unto his work ybent,
 Who was to weet a wretched wearish elf,
 With hollow eyes and raw bone cheeks forespent,
 As if he had in prison long been pent :
 Full black and grievously did his face appear,
 Besmeared with smoke, that nigh his eyesight blent ;
 With rugged beard, and hoary shagged hair,
 The which he never wönt to comb, or comely shear.

St. 35.

St. 35.

Rude was his garment, and to rags all rent,
 Ne better had he, ne for better car'd :
 With blister'd hands among the cinders brent,
 And fingers filthy with long nails unpar'd,
 Right fit to rend the food on which he fared.
 His name was *Care* ; a blacksmith by his trade,
 That neither day nor night from working spar'd,
 But to small purpose iron wedges made ;
 Those be unquiet thoughts that careful minds invade.

Besides the lively representation which the Poet here gives of this allegorical figure, there is a beautiful allegory and a fine moral contained in the two concluding lines, which can hardly escape the notice of the reader.

We shall next consider Spenser's talent in the invention of *imagery*. In this species of invention the exuberance of his imagination appears very remarkably ; and perhaps there is no Poet ancient or modern in whose writings we shall find a greater variety of beautiful and sublime images. It will be sufficient for our purpose to select a few of these. The dreadful shock produced by the first onset of the Red Cross Knight and Sans

Joy

Joy in their combat, inflamed as they were with mutual rage, is strongly expressed by the following image.

As when a griffon, seized of his prey,
A dragon fierce encountereth in his flight,
Through widest air making his ydle way,
That would his rightful ravine rend away :
With hideous horror both together smite,
And soule so fore, that they the heavens affray.
The wise southsayer seeing so sad fight,
Th' amazed vulgar tells of wars and mortal fight.

Book i. cant. 4. st. 8.

The Poet desirous to give us a high opinion of the prowess of prince Arthur, who was destined to release the Red Cross knight from the captivity in which he was held by the giant and Dueffa, introduces him to our view with that pomp and sublimity of description which was calculated to produce suitable conceptions of his matchless valour. After having described the bauldric and the sword of this illustrious hero, he seems to employ the utmost effort of his Genius in attempting to convey a lively idea of the grand and tremendous appearance of his helmet,

helmet, which he effectually accomplishes by a very sublime description, concluding with one of the noblest and most beautiful images that ever entered into the imagination of a Poet.

Upon the top of all his lofty crest
A bunch of hairs discolour'd diversly,
With sprinkled pearl and gold, full richly drest,
Did shake, and seem'd to dance for jollity,
Like to an almond tree, ymounted high,
On top of green Selin is all alone,
With blossoms brave bedecked daintily,
Whose tender locks do tremble every one,
At every little breath that under heaven is blown.

Book i. cant. 7. st. 32.

That sublime image of the Dog-star, to which Homer has compared the hair that sparkled on the crest of Achilles' helmet, sheds indeed a "terrific glory" over his whole figure that strikes us with dread; while this of Spenser, quite of a different kind, distinguished nevertheless by its sublimity, though still more by its beauty and elegance, throws a kind of divine splendor around the person of his hero, which wraps

us in admiration. The fall of the giant, one of whose legs prince Arthur had cut off, is with great propriety as well as sublimity compared to a tree falling from the top of a rock, after it had been well nigh hewn through by the woodman's ax.

— Down he tumbled, as an aged tree
High growing on the top of rocky clift,
Whose heart strings with keen steel nigh hewen be,
The mighty trunk half rent, with ragged rift
Doth roll adown the rocks and fall with fearful drift.

Book i. cant. 8. st. 22.

The encounter betwixt the Red Cross Knight and the dragon, in the eleventh canto of the first book, furnishes our author with a variety of the grandest images that are to be met with in Poetry. It may be worth the while to attend a little to the different resemblances he has formed on the bulk, appearances and actions of this tremendous monster. He gives us an idea of his magnitude by the following similitude.

Estfoons that dreadful dragon they espy'd,
Where stretch'd he lay upon the sunny side
Of a great hill, himself like a great hill.

st. 4.
Speaking

Speaking of his wings he tells us,

His flaggy wings when forth he did display,
Were like two sails, in which the hollow wind
Is gathered full. ft. 10.

Describing his mouth he says,

His deep devouring jaws
Wide gaped like the grisly mouth of hell. ft. 12.

The largeness and gleaming splendor of his
eyes are represented by two striking images.

His blazing eyes, like two bright shining shields,
Did burn with wrath, and sparkled living fire :
As two broad beacons, set in open fields,
Send forth their flames far off to every shire.

He adds,

But far within, as in a hollow glade,
Those glaring lamps were set, that made a dreadful shade. ft. 14.

This dreadful animal having been wounded
by the knight, we are told

He cried, as raging seas are wont to roar
When wintry storm his wrathful wreck does threat. ft. 21.

Q 2 The

The flame and smoak which this monster
spues out of his mouth upon having one of
his feet cut off, which had been fastened on
the knight's shield, is represented by an
image equally proper and great.

For grief thereof and devilish despight,
From his infernal furnace forth he threw
Huge flames, that dimmed all the heaven's light,
As burning *Ætna* from his boiling stew
Doth belch out flames, and rocks in pieces broke,
And ragged ribs of mountains molten new,
Enwrappt in coal black clouds and filthy smoak,
That all the land with stench, and heaven with horror
choak. ft. 44.

The fall of this hideous monster is likewise
represented by a grand image.

So down he fell, as an huge rocky cliff,
Whose false foundation wayes have wash'd away,
With dreadful poise is from the main land rift,
And rolling down great Neptune doth dismay;
So down he fell, and like an heaped mountain lay.

St. 54.

To the above images we shall take the li-
berty to subjoin two others, from a different
part

part of our author's work. Prince Arthur and Sir Guyon having routed the foes of Temperance, which were no other than certain visionary and unsubstantial beings, the Poet expresses their dispersion and flight by a similitude remarkably elegant and apposite.

As when a swarm of gnats at even tide,
Out of the fens of Allan do arise,
Their murmuring small trumpets sounding wide,
While in the air their clustring army flies,
That as a cloud doth seem to dim the skies ;
Ne man nor beast may rest, not take repast,
For their sharp wounds and noyous injuries,
Till the fierce northern wind with blustering blast
Doth blow them quite away, and in the ocean cast.

Book ii. cant. 9. st. 16.

The author could not have found a more proper image in the whole compass of nature, to express the sudden dispersion of the ærial tribe which infested the prince and Sir Guyon than he here uses; and the reader will observe that it is rendered peculiarly picturesque, by being appropriated to a particular and well known object. The poet

makes the gnats to arise out of the fens of Allan.

Britomartis having long concealed herself in the armour of a knight, at last discovers her sex, to the astonishment of the spectators, in the house of Malbuco. The appearance of this heroine after the sudden transformation of her dress is expressed by a glorious image.

Like as Minerva being late return'd
From slaughter of the giants conquered;
Where proud Encelade, whose wide nostrils burn'd
With breathed flames, like to a furnace red,
Transfix'd with the spear, down tumbled dead
From top of Hemus, by him heaped high:
Hath loos'd her helmet from her lofty head,
And her Gorgonian shield 'gins to unty
From her left arm, to rest in glorious victory.

Book iii. cant. 9. ft. 22.

We are next to consider Spenser's talent in the invention of sentiment. The lamentation of Una, after she had been informed of the various misfortunes of her lover, is equally sublime and pathetic. Addressing herself to the sun, she thus exclaims.

O lightſome day, the lamp of higheſt Jove,
 Firſt made by him men's wand'ring ways to guide
 When darkneſs he in deepeſt dungeon drove,
 Henceforth thy hated face for ever hide,
 And ſhut up heavens windows ſhining wide :
 For earthly ſight can nought but ſorrow breed,
 And late repentance which ſhall long abide.
 Mine eyes no more on vanity ſhall feed,
 But ſealed up with death ſhall have their deadly meed.

Book i. cant. 7. ſt. 23.

The ſong of Phædria or Immodest Mirth,
 with which ſhe lulled her paſſengers aſleep,
 is diſtinguiſhed by a ſublimity of ſentiment
 as well as by the excellence of the morals
 that may be derived from it, however miſ-
 applied by this wanton miniſter of Pleaſure.

We ſhall ſatisfy ourſelves with quoting a
 ſingle ſtanza of this artful ſong, which the
 reader will obſerve is a kind of paraphraſe
 on a part of the ſixth chapter of Matthew.

Behold, O man, that toilsome pains doſt take,
 The flowers, the fields, and all that pleaſant grows,
 How they themſelves do thine enſample make,
 Whiles nothing envious nature them forth throws
 Out of her fruitful lap : how no man knows,
 They ſpring, they bud, they bloſſom freſh and fair,

Q 4

And

And deck the world with their rich pompous shows :
 Yet no man for them taketh pains or care,
 Yet no man to them can his careful pains compare.

Book ii. cant. 6. st. 15.

We have a train of sublime and moral sentiment enlivened with the most pleasing imagery, perverted likewise in the application, in a song chaunted over by one of the votaries of Pleasure, while this enchantress is soothing an unhappy youth in voluptuous languor, whom she had seduced by her bewitching blandishments.

The whiles, some one did chaunt this lovely lay ;
 Ah ! see who so fair thing dost fain to see,
 In springing flower the image of thy day ;
 Ah ! see the virgin rose, how sweetly she
 Doth first peep forth with bashful modesty,
 That fairer seems the less you see her may ;
 Lo ! see soon after, how more bold and free
 Her bared bosom she doth broad display ;
 Lo ! see soon after how she fades and dies away.

So passeth in the passing of a day,
 Of mortal life, the leaf, the bud, the flower,
 Ne more doth flourish after first decay,
 That erst was sought to deck both bed and bower
 Of many a lady, and many a paramour :

Gather

Gather therefore the rose whilst yet in prime,
 For soon comes age, that will her pride deflower;
 Gather the rose of love whilst yet is time,
 Whilst loving thou mayst loved be with equal crime.

Book ii. cant. 12. st. 74, 75.

Spenser's sentiments are likewise deeply pathetic when propriety requires it. The mistress of Amavia, who through excess of grief for the death of her husband that had fallen the victim of Intemperate Pleasure, had it should seem laid violent hands on herself, is wrought up to such a pitch, that we almost forget her sufferings are merely allegorical; and we feel ourselves apt to take an interest in them, as if they were probable or real. The following important call on Death to relieve her from all her sorrows at once, indicates a heart overwhelmed and bursting with grief.

Come then, come soon, come sweetest death to me,
 And take away this long lent loathed light:
 Sharp be thy wounds, but sweet the med'cines be
 That long captived souls from weary thralldom free.

Book ii. cant. i. st. 36.

Then

Then addressing herself to her infant who lay
by her side while she was expiring, she adds,

But thou sweet babe, whom frowning froward fate
Hath made sad witness of thy father's fall,
Sith heaven thee deigns to hold in living state,
Long mayst thou live and better thrive withal,
Than to thy luckless parents did befall :
Live thou, and to thy mother dead attest,
That clear she died from blemish criminal ;
Thy little hands embrued in bleeding breast,
Lo, I for pledges leave. So give me leave to rest. ft. 37.

The address of Sir Guyon to this unhappy
orphan breathes the melting tenderness of
passion, sympathizing with the miseries of
the unfortunate, and concludes with a fine
moral.

Ah ! luckless babe, born under cruel star,
And in dead parents baleful ashes bred,
Full little weeneft thou what sorrows are
Left thee for portion of thy livelihood ;
Poor orphan, in the wide world scattered,
As budding branch rent from the native tree,
And throwen forth till it be withered :
Such is the state of men ; thus enter we
Into this life with woe, and end with misery.

Cant. ii. ft. 2.

Vivid

Vivid and picturesque description we considered as another invariable characteristic of original Poetic Genius; let us observe in what degree this quality appears in the writings of Spenser.

In the first canto of the first book we have a description of *Hypocrisy* or *Deceit*, which places this figure full in our eye.

At length they chanc'd to meet upon the way
 An aged Sire, in long black weeds yclad,
 His feet all bare, his head all hoary gray,
 And by his belt his book he hanging had;
 Sober he seem'd, and very sagely sad,
 And to the ground his eyes were lowly bent,
 Simple in shew and void of malice bad,
 And all the way he prayed as he went,
 And often knock'd his breast, as one that did repent.

St. 29.

This picture is complete, and really discovers the hand of a master. The abode of *Hypocrisy* is likewise drawn with great vivacity of imagination. This arch magician having allured the knight and Una to his hermitage, is next represented as preparing
 his

his charms while they were asleep, for effectuating their separation and misery. His occupation and character are described in so vivid a manner as to excite a kind of dread in the mind of the reader, similar to what he would experience were he a witness of his incantations.

Then choosing out few words most horrible,
 (Let none them read) thereof did verses frame,
 With which, and other spells like terrible,
 He bade awake black *Pluto's* grievly dame,
 And cursed heaven, and spake reproachful shame
 Of highest God, the lord of life and light;
 A bold bad man, that dar'd to call by name
 Great *Gorgon*, prince of darkness and dead night,
 At which *Cocytus* quakes, and *Styx* is put to flight.

The Poet then relates the effects of his incantations with equal vivacity,

And forth he call'd out of deep darkness dread
 Legions of sprights, the which like little flies
 Fluttering about his ever damned head,
 Await whereto their service he applies. St. 37, 38.

The consternation and surprize which
 seized the ghosts in *Pluto's* dominions, upon
 seeing

seeing *Duessa* and *Night* driving through those regions in a chariot together, are represented in so striking a manner, that though the passage representing it has been celebrated by several, and is much admired by those who are qualified to read Spenser's Poetry with taste, I cannot resolve to omit placing it before the reader here.

On every side them stood
The trembling ghosts, with sad amazed mood,
Chattering their iron teeth, and staring wide
With stony eyes; and all the hellish brood
Of fiends infernal flock'd on every side,
To gaze on earthly wight that with the *Night* durst ride.
Cant. v. st. 32.

The figure of the three headed *Dog of Hell* in this draught deserves likewise particular notice.

Before the threshold, dreadful Cerberus,
His three deformed heads did lay along,
Curled with thousand adders venomous,
And lolled forth his bloody flaming tongue:
At them he 'gan to rear his bristles strong,
And felly gnarre.

The

The reader cannot fail to observe that the latter part of the description is remarkably picturesque, particularly the fourth line.

And lolled forth his bloody flaming tongue.

Cant. v. ft. 34.

In the seventh canto of this book we have a description of prince Arthur's armour, not unworthy to be compared with that of the armour of Achilles in the eighteenth book of the Iliad. What vivacity and sublime dignity has the Poet thrown into the following representation of his helmet!

His haughty helmet, horrid all with gold,

Both glorious brightness and great terror bred;

For all the crest a dragon did enfold,

With greedy paws, and over all did spread

His golden wings: his dreadful hideous head,

Close couched on the beaver, seem'd to throw

From flaming mouth bright sparkles fiery red,

That sudden horror to faint hearts did shew;

And scaly tail was stretch'd adown his back full low.

Cant. vii. ft. 31.

The description of Una's situation, wandering in quest of her captive lover, is at once so picturesque and tenderly pathetic, that
the

the reader will excuse my inserting it.

And ever more in constant careful mind
 She fed her wound with fresh renewed bale;
 Long tofs'd with storms, and beat with bitter wind,
 High over hills, and low adown the dale,
 She wandered many a wood, and measur'd many a vale.

Cant. vii. st. 28.

For farther examples of vivid and picturesque description we shall refer the reader to the draughts which our Poet has presented us with of the gardens of *Adonis*, * the temple of *Venus*, and the bower of *Bliss*, as we cannot afford room to exhibit them in this place. The last is indeed very closely copied from the Armida of Tasso, (as both are imitations of the Calypso and Circe of Homer,) and therefore cannot be properly adduced as an example of originality of Genius, though we may observe that the description, rich and luxuriant as it is in the Jerusalem delivered, is in some parts improved by our English Poet. Those who

* B. iii. C. 6.

are desirous of tracing the imitation of Spenser, and comparing the English and Italian Genius for descriptive Poetry, may consult the fifteenth and sixteenth books of the Jerusalem delivered, and the twelfth canto of the second book of the Fairy Queen, remembring always in justice to Tasso that in this instance his description is the original of which the other is only the copy. In the mean time we shall beg leave to add two other passages to those above quoted, as examples of the force of poetical and picturesque representation, from the seventh canto of the second book, where many striking allegorical figures are portrayed with the utmost exuberance, justness, and strength of imagination. Let the following lines stand for a proof.

By that way's side there sat internal *Pain*,
 And fast beside him sat tumultuous *Strife*;
 The one in hand an iron whip did strain,
 The other brandished a bloody knife,
 And both did gnash their teeth, and both did threaten life.

On the other side, in one consort there sat
 Cruel *Revenge* and rancorous *Despight*,

Disloyal

Disloyal *Treason*, and heart-burning *Hate*;
 But gnawing *Jealousy* out of their sight
 Sitting alone, his bitter lips did bite;
 And trembling fear, still too and fro did fly,
 And found no place where safe he shroud him might;
 Lamenting *Sorrow* did in darkness lie,
 And *Shame*, his ugly face did hide from living eye.

St. 21. 22.

All these characters are marked by their most striking qualities or insignia; but *Jealousy* and *Fear* make a distinguished appearance amidst the group of allegorical figures, and a painter of Genius might easily copy them on canvas. The whole description taken together, may justly vie with that celebrated one of Virgil of the several figures which he places at the gates of hell*; and the succeeding stanza is upon account of a certain daring and picturesque sublimity, superior to any passage of this kind even in the immortal *Æneid*.

And over them sad *Horror*, with grim hue,
 Did always soar, beating his iron wings,
 And after him owls and night ravens flew,

* *Æneid* vi.

The hateful messengers of heavy things,
 Of death and dolour telling sad tidings:
 While sad *Celso*, sitting on a cliff,
 A song of bale and bitter sorrow sings,
 That heart of flint a sunder could have rift:
 Which having ended, after him she flieth swift.

It is impossible to bestow too high encomiums on this admirable passage. The idea of *Horror* soaring aloft and clapping his iron wings, and of *Celso* sitting on a cliff, singing her baleful song, and flying after the other, when she had ended it, is amazingly great, and conceived with the utmost strength of imagination.

Irregular greatness, wildness and enthusiasm of imagination, the last mentioned characteristics of original Poetic Genius, are sufficiently observable in the writings of Spenser. Several of the incidents we have hinted at in the beginning of this section, indicate the existence of the two first of these qualities. Thus for instance the combats of prince Arthur with the giants Orgoglio and Corflambo, the descent of Dueffa
 and

and Night to hell, in order to accomplish the cure of Sans Foy, and the dreadful encounter betwixt the Red Cross Knight and the Dragon, to mention no more, are striking examples of an irregular grandeur of imagination, rejecting the restraint of rules, and aiming in all its conceptions at something vast and marvellous. Of an agreeable and happy wildness of imagination we have examples in the story of the birth of Belphœbe and Amoret, of the enchantments of Busirane, of the girdle of Florimel, of her captivity by Proteus, and her final release, and of the marriage of the Thames and Medway. Of true poetic enthusiasm the passages aboveadduced are sufficient proofs. We observed lastly, that original Poetic Genius will always discover itself in allegories, visions, or in the invention and exhibition of ideal figures of one kind or another. That the truly original Genius of Spenser hath discovered itself in the first of these kinds of fiction, appears from his admirable poem of the Fairy Queen, which is altogether allegorical.

S E C T. V.

O F M I L T O N.

THE last great *original Genius* in Poetry, of our own country, to be considered by us, is Milton; we assign him a place after his illustrious predecessors, of whom we have been treating upon the account of the order of time, not upon account of any inferiority of merit; for he was inferior to none.

Nor second he, that rode sublime

Upon the seraph wings of extasy,

The secrets of the abyss to spy;

He pass'd the flaming bounds of space and time.

The living throne, the sapphire blaze,

Where angels tremble while they gaze,

He saw,

GRAY.

Let us then enquire in what degree the characteristics of elevated and original Genius in Poetry, enumerated in the preceding book, are found in *Paradise Lost*, the capital work of Milton.

The

The far gréatest part of the incidents in this divine poem are intirely the invention of the author. The story of the fall of man, which he chose for his subject, and which was every way suitable to, and worthy of the grandeur of his Genius, is very short as it is related in the sacred writings; and the poet therefore, in order to render it interesting to his readers, was obliged to amplify it by the superaddition of many particulars, the fictions of his own imagination. There is not indeed so great a number of incidents invented in *Paradise Lost* as in the *Iliad*, or even in the *Jerusalem* delivered; but the incidents in the former are truly grand, and of the most extraordinary kind. We shall just touch upon some of these. The Pandæmonium described in the first book, so suddenly constructed, the infernal council there assembled; Satan's interview with Sin and Death, * his astonishing flight

through the regions of Chaos and old Night, * his coasting the walls of Heaven, and final arrival on the confines of Earth, † are all great and striking incidents which could never have been invented but by a poet of the most exalted Genius. The above mentioned interview hath indeed been censured by Mr. Addison ‡, as contrary to the rules of epic poetry; and it must be confessed, that the introducing allegorical persons into a poem, the professed design of which is to instruct us by a representation of actions strictly probable, is a manifest impropriety in such a performance; yet we are persuaded no reader of taste would wish that this beautiful allegory of Milton, in which the genealogy nature and offices of Sin and Death are so properly attributed, had been left out. It ought likewise to be remembered that we cannot condemn this licence in our English poet, without at the same time condemning

* Book ii. † Book iii. ‡ Spec. vol. iv. No. 315.

another of a similar nature in Homer, who has personified (only not allegorically) sleep and death, to whom he has assigned the employment of carrying the body of Sarpedon to Lycia his native country, in obedience to the command of Jupiter; and the reader will surely have as great difficulty in conceiving these to be real persons in the Iliad, as in conceiving Sin and Death to be such in the Paradise Lost. The observation which we made in a preceding work, * that it is the privilege of a great Genius to break through certain rules which will be for ever binding on persons of ordinary abilities, not only with impunity, but sometimes with applause, seems to be exemplified in this instance we have adduced from Milton. Such a Genius always compensates for a transgression of this kind, by some signal beauty, upon account of which we forgive, perhaps in some cases applaud the successful viola-

* An Essay on Original Genius, Book ii. Sect. 5.

tion of strict probability. We may further observe upon this head, that the various shapes assumed, and artifices used by Satan in order to deceive our first mother, the intercourse betwixt Gabriel and this Arch-fiend, and the warning given by Raphael to Adam and Eve, of the danger of their seduction, are all well contrived incidents, and incontestible proofs of the fertility of the poet's fancy. The battles of the angels in the sixth book, together with the exploits of the Messiah discovered in the rout of the rebel angels, who are hurled from the battlements of heaven into the depths of hell, and the creation of the world in the seventh, are noble episodes, and make a proper pause in the main action; they are full of great and surprizing circumstances, which give Milton an opportunity of exerting the strength and sublimity of his Genius. The revelation which Michael gives to Adam in the eleventh book by a prophetic vision, of the various events regarding his posterity,

is a fine fiction, and judiciously contrived to sooth and compose the mind of our first ancestor, greatly disquieted by the apprehension of the fatal consequence of his fall to future generations.

The characters exhibited by Milton are every way suitable to those great incidents they are employed to effectuate. That of Satan is a most striking figure. It is a compleat original, and can never be contemplated without admiration and astonishment. It is a compound of the greatest and worst qualities in nature. Let us observe a little how our poet has developed this very extraordinary character. He appears desirous in the first place to give us a sublime idea of his enormous size; in order to execute which, he tells us that while he was stretched on the burning lake with his head lifted above the waves,

His other parts besides

Prone on the flood, extended long and large,

Lay floating many a rood.

Book i. l. 194

Our

Our idea of his gigantic and superior stature
is heightened by a grand image,

He, above the rest
In shape and gesture proudly eminent,
Stood like a tower.

Book i. l. 589.

His blasted appearance is described a little
below, in a manner at once picturesque and
sublime.

But his face
Deep scars of thunder had intrench'd, and Care
Sat on his faded cheek.

The poet has likewise sketched out his men-
tal qualities with great mastery. The in-
flexible obstinacy of his temper is strongly
intimated in the congratulatory address
which Satan himself makes to his new ha-
bitation.

Hail horrors ! hail.
Infernal world ! and thou profoundest hell
Receive thy new possessor ! One who brings
A mind not to be chang'd by place or time.

Book i. l. 250.

His unconquerable ambition, and obdurate
pride,

pride, appear equally conspicuous from a subsequent part of this speech,

Here we may reign secure ; and in my choice
To reign is worth ambition, though in hell :
Better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven.

His confirmed bent to mischief is thus expressed by himself in the end of his soliloquy in the fourth book.

Farewel remorse ! all good to me is lost :
Evil be thou my good ! By thee at least
Divided empire with heaven's king I hold.

In order to render the character of Satan completely wicked, the poet attributes envy to him as well as malignity. On contemplating the happiness of our first parents, he tell us

Afide the Devil turn'd
For envy.

The characters of the other princes of hell are drawn in their proper and different lineaments, though not so particularly, as they were not intended to be so frequently
exhi-

exhibited, or to be such conspicuous figures as Satan. Moloch is characterized by the stern ferocity of his manners, by his haughty pride, and by his desperate schemes of revenge. Belial is distinguished by his eloquence and plausible appearance, varnishing over his natural timidity, as well as his mean and wicked designs. Mammon is represented as the least erect of all the spirits which fell from heaven, and as more captivated with the splendor of the place than with the occupations and enjoyments of its inhabitants; and Beelzebub, next in dignity to Satan, draws our attention by his majestic port, and the appearance of sage deliberation; all which characters the reader will find marked in their several speeches, in the beginning of the second book, to which we refer him. The character of our great progenitor in his state of innocence is highly respectable; and that of his fair spouse extremely amiable. To crown all, the appearance of the Messiah is

is full of majesty and mildness; it exhibits the unutterable benignity and awful grandeur of the Godhead united together in perfect harmony. The excellent criticisms of Mr. Addison on *Paradise Lost*, which are so well known, render it unnecessary to unfold these characters at any length, nor is a particular display of them compatible with the nature of our design; and we therefore rather pass the consideration of them at present, as we shall have occasion to quote some passages under the other heads, which will serve to set the above mentioned characters, and especially the last, in the most striking view.

Let us therefore in the next place consider Milton's talent in the invention and adaption of the images of poetry. Of these we find a great variety in *Paradise Lost*, most of them as original as they are sublime. There is no part of this poem in which the author has discovered so much strength and grandeur of imagination as in his descriptions of the fallen archangels;
selecting

selecting at the same time the greatest images in nature, in order to convey to us an idea of his lofty and gigantic stature. He had formerly compared him to a tower, in a passage which we had already occasion to quote; in the following one, when he is preparing himself for combat with Gabriel, our idea of the size and terrible majesty of this prince of hell is raised still higher, by an image which strikes us with astonishment.

On th' other side Satan alarm'd,
 Collecting all his might dilated stood
 Like Teneriff, or Atlas unremoved :
 His stature reach'd the sky, and on his crest
 Sat *Horror* plum'd. Book iv. l. 985.

That part of the description immediately following the image, which represents "his stature as reaching to the sky, and *Horror* as sitting plumed on his crest," is calculated to raise our conceptions of his stupendous height and of his dreadful form to the utmost height. Milton's imagination seems to expand itself whenever the figure of
 this

this tremendous angel is presented to his mind, in order to take in the vastness of the idea, which he never fails to communicate in his descriptions. It is impossible to conceive a nobler image, or one more happily adapted to express the faded splendor of Satans form, which the poet tells us, still exhibited "the excess of glory obscured," than the following.

As when the sun new risen
Looks through the horizontal misty air,
Shorn of his beams; or from behind the moon,
In dim eclipse disastrous twilight sheds
On half the nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes monarchs; darkened so, yet shone
Above them all th' archangel. Book i. l. 594.

One image is here presented in two different lights, and it is truly great in which ever of these we view it. That by which he represents the rest of the fallen angels, the associates of Satan, and standing around him, is likewise very much in the same spirit.

As when heaven's fire
Hath seath'd the forest oaks, or mountain pines,
With singed top their stately growth, though bare,
Stands on the blasted heath. Book i. l. 612.

The

The appearance of Satan flying at a distance
is represented by the following admirable
and picturesque similitude.

As when far off at sea a fleet descry'd
Hangs in the clouds by æquinoctial winds,
Close sailing from Bengala, or the isles
Of Ternate and Tidore,
— So seem'd
Far off the flying fiend. Book ii. l. 636.

That image by which he is described as
springing aloft like a pyramid of fire, after
he had ended his conversation with Chaos,
is astonishingly wild and great*, as is like-
wise that other by which the dreadful ap-
pearance of this archfiend is represented,
while he is preparing to encounter death.

On th' other side,
Incens'd with indignation, Satan stood
Unterrified: and like a comet burn'd,
That fires the length of Ophiucus huge
In th' artick sky, and from his horrid hair
Shakes pestilence and war. Book ii. l. 706.

* Book ii. l. 1013.

There are a few of Milton's sublime images, which serve to shew the strength and greatness of his imagination; we shall next present the reader with two or three peculiarly distinguished by their elegance and delicacy. He gives us the following idea of the beauty of Eve.

More lovely fair

Than wood nymph, or the fairest goddess feign'd
Of three that in mount Ida naked strove !

Book v. l. 380.

He thus describes her gracefulness parting from her husband.

Soft she withdrew; and like a wood nymph light
Oread, or Dryad, or of Delia's train,
Betook her to the groves; but Delia's self
In gait surpass'd and goddess like deport.

Book ix. l. 386.

The image by which the poet represents the transformation of the rebel angels of an inferior order, that they might find proper accommodation in Pandæmonium, is not only elegant and pleasing, but has something in it wildly beautiful.

S

Behold

Behold a wonder ! they but now who seem'd
 In bigness to surpass earth's giant sons,
 Now less than smallest dwarfs, in narrow room,
 Throng numberless, like that Pygmean race
 Beyond the Indian mount, or fairy elves ;
 Whose midnight revels by a forest side,
 Or fountain, some belated peasant sees,
 Or dreams he sees, while over head the moon
 Wheels her pale course : they on their mirth and dance
 Intent, with jocund music charm his ear :
 At once with joy and fear, his heart rebounds.

Book i. l. 777.

Milton discovers the greatness of his Genius in the invention of sublime and pathetic sentiments, as well as in the other species of invention above mentioned. His address to Light, with which the third book opens, is an example of true sublimity of sentiment, as it forms a very proper introduction to this book, after the horrors he had surveyed in the preceding ones.

Hail holy Light ! offspring of heaven first born !
 Or of th' eternal co-eternal beam !
 May I express thee unblam'd ? since God is Light,
 And never but in unapproach'd Light
 Dwelt from eternity ; dwelt then in thee,

Bright

Bright effluence of bright essence increate !
 Or hear' st thou rather pure ethereal stream,
 Whose fountain who shall tell ? Before the sun,
 Before the heavens thou wert, and at the voice
 Of God, as with a mantle, didst invest
 The rising world of waters dark and deep,
 Won from the void and formless infinite.
 Thee I revisit now with bolder wing,
 Escap'd the stygian pool, though long detain'd
 In that obscure sojourn,

We shall just observe by the way, that the poet's digression from this subject to that of his own blindness which follows, is highly natural and pathetic. The address of Satan to the Sun in the beginning of the fourth book, so distinguished for sublimity of sentiment, is too well known to require being quoted or illustrated. The morning orisons of Adam and Eve however are so much in this spirit, that the reader will excuse my inserting a short extract from them.

These are thy glorious works, parent of good !
 Almighty ! thine this universal frame ;
 Thus wondrous fair ! thyself how wondrous then !
 Unspeakable ! who sit'st above these heavens,

To us invifible or dimly feen,
In thefe thy loweft works : yet thefe declare
Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine.

Book v. l. 153.

Milton likewife discovers great command over the paffions, in thofe affecting fentiments which he attributes to our firft ancestors after their unhappy fall from a ftate of rectitude and innocence. Eve after having eaten of the forbidden fruit, and felt its intoxicating effects, comes in hafte to Adam, in order to acquaint him of the furprizing vertues of it, which ſhe fancies herfelf to have experienced. Adam ſtruck with amazement and horror at the information, Thus exclaims.

O faireft of creation ! laft and beft
Of all God's works ! Creature in whom excell'd
Whatever can to fight, or thought, be found
Holy, divine, good, amiable, or ſweet !
How art thou loſt !

Book ix. l. 896.

He declares however his reſolution to participate her fate whatever it might be, ſince
he

he could not support existence without her.

✓ Milton has taken care to inform us that he was not deceived in this case,

But fondly overcome with female charm.

Book ix. l. 999.

After the fumes occasioned by the fatal fruit were dissipated, Adam deeply sensible of his guilt and misery; and penetrated at the same time with anguish and shame, the most affecting circumstance of which to him was, his having forfeited that delightful intercourse he had formerly enjoyed with his Creator and the heavenly inhabitants, seems under a sense of this insupportable loss to resign himself to despair.

How shall I behold the face
Henceforth of God, or angel, erst with joy
And rapture so oft beheld? those heavenly shapes
Will dazzle now this earthly, with their blaze
Insufferably bright. O! might I here
In solitude live savage; in some glade
Obscur'd, where highest woods, impenetrable
To star, or sun-light, spread their umbrage broad,
And brown as ev'ning! Cover me ye pines!

Ye cedars with innumerable boughs
Hide me, where I may never see them more!

Book x. l. 1080.

In the following book he resumes the theme of his grief, and considering the manifold miseries of his situation, earnestly wishes for death to put a period to them, regarding the prospect of his dissolution as his only comfort.

How gladly would I meet
Mortality my sentence, and be earth
Insensible! How glad would lay me down
As in my mothers lap! There I should rest,
And sleep secure: his dreadful voice no more
Would thunder in my ears; Book x. l. 775.

A little after, contemplating the more remote and dreadful consequences of his crime on his progeny, he thus pathetically expresses his sense of it.

In me all
Posterity stands curs'd! Fair patrimony
That I must leave you, sons! O! were I able
To waste it all myself and leave you none!
So disinherited, how would ye bless
Me, now your curse! Book x. l. 817.
The

The situation in which the father of mankind is represented in the close of this moving soliloquy, and the sentiments which he utters, are beyond measure affecting. No reader of sensibility can peruse this passage, without feeling the strongest emotions of pity for our first ancestor.

On the Ground

Outstretch'd he lay ! on the cold ground ! and oft
 Curs'd his creation ; Death as oft accus'd
 Of tardy execution, since denounc'd
 The day of his offence. Why comes not Death,
 Said he, with one thrice acceptable stroke
 To end me ? shall Truth fail to keep her word ?
 Justice divine not hasten to be just ?
 But Death comes not at call ; justice divine
 Mends not her slowest pace for prayers, or cries !
 O woods ! O fountains ! hillocks, dales and bowers !
 With other echo late I taught your shades
 To answer, and resound far other song ! l. 850.

Eve deeply affected with seeing Adam abandoned to grief and despair, and unable to restrain the efforts of affectionate tenderness, yet afraid of rankling the fierceness of his passion by an unseasonable attempt to

allay it, approaches to him with a humble timidity of demeanour, in order to mitigate gradually the violence of his sorrow by participating it, and administer all the consolation which an afflicted and sympathizing heart could suggest. Adam however casting his eye upon her, just when she was going to address him; and considering her as the sole cause of their joint misery, gives her in the phrenzy of his passion a severe rebuke, arraigning at the same time the wisdom of Providence in her creation.

O ! why did God
 Creator wise ! that peopled highest heaven
 With spirits masculine, create at last
 This novelty on earth, this fair defect
 Of nature ? And not fill the world at once
 With men as angels, without feminine ? 1. 888.

Eve however, though she intensely felt the mortifying repulse she had met with, grows more fervently importunate than ever, prostrates herself before him, and by the most moving supplications implores his forgiveness, and the return of his affection;

Forfake

Forsake me not thus Adam? Witness heav'n
 What love sincere, and rev'rence in my heart
 I bear thee, and unweeting have offended,
 Unhappily deceiv'd! Thy suppliant
 I beg, and clasp thy knees: — bereave me not
 Whereon I live, thy gentle looks, thy aid,
 Thy counsel, in this uttermost distress,
 My only strength and stay! Forlorn of thee
 Whither shall I betake me? where subsist?
 While yet we live, scarce one short hour perhaps,
 Between us two let there be peace! l. 914.

The effect of this pathetic address was just
 what we should have expected. There is
 an eloquence in the importunity and tears of
 distressful beauty which hath seldom failed
 to appease the violence of rage, and to
 awaken the tender sensations of sympathy
 and love.

Soon his heart relented

Tow'rds her, his life so late, and sole delight,
 Now at his feet submissive in distress! l. 940

To the passages above quoted from Para-
 dise Lost, we shall subjoin one more very
 beautiful and pathetic. Eve having, at the
 desire of her husband, upon his observing
 the

the angel approach, who was commissioned to remove them both from Paradise, retired for a little; and overhearing the heavenly messenger deliver his commission, suddenly breaks in upon their conference, uttering the following natural and affecting exclamation.

O unexpected stroke ! worse than of death !
 Must I thus leave thee Paradise ? thus leave
 Thee native soil ! these happy walks, and shades,
 Fit haunt of Gods ! where I had hope to spend
 Quiet, though sad, the respite of that day
 That must be mortal to us both ! O flowers !
 That never will in other climate grow,
 My early visitation, and my last
 At ev'n, which I bred up with tender hand
 From the first op'ning bud, and gave ye names.
 Who now shall rear you to the sun, or rank
 Your tribes, and water from th' ambrosial fount ?
 Thee lastly, nuptial bower ! by me adorn'd
 With what to sight, or smell, was sweet ! from thee
 How shall I part, and whither wander down,
 Into a lower world ; to this obscure
 And wild ! How shall we breathe in other air
 Less pure, accusom'd to immortal fruits ?

Book xi. l. 268.

Milton possessed talents for descriptive
 poetry,

poetry in as high a degree as any Poet whatever. The following description is as truly wild and picturesque as any that we remember to have met with. It is entirely in Shakespear's spirit, by whose wildest descriptions of the occupations of ghosts and witches, in which his chief talent lay, it is we think not excelled. Speaking of the hell hounds, which incessantly barked and yelled in the womb of sin, and around her, he adds,

Not uglier follow the night hag, when call'd
In secret, riding through the air she comes
Lur'd by the smell of infant blood to dance
With Lapland witches, while the labouring moon
Eclipses at their charms. Book ii. l 662.

There is something so wildly solemn, and at the same time so horrible and terrific in this description, that our blood runs chill in the perusal. It is surprizing that so striking a passage should have escaped the notice of the celebrated Mr. Addison in his criticisms upon *Paradise Lost*. The flight of Satan, after he had surveyed from the confines of hell the dominions of Chaos through which

which he was to pass, is described with great sublimity, and in so vivid a manner, as to place the figure of this dreadful fiend soaring aloft full in our eye.

At last his sail broad vans
He spreads for flight, and in the surging smoke
Uplifted spurns the ground : thence many a league,
As in a cloudy chair, ascending rides
Audacious Book ii. l. 927.

The description of the combat betwixt Michael and Satan in the sixth book is raised with unequalled sublimity. We are struck with astonishment at the tremendous appearance and more than mortal prowess of either angel, and we wait the issue of the combat in anxious and dread suspense.

For likest Gods they seem'd,
Stood they, or mov'd : in stature, motion, arms,
Fit to decide the empire of great heav'n !
Now wav'd their fiery swords, and in the air
Made horrid circles ; two broad suns their shields
Blaz'd opposite, while expectation flood
In horror. Book vi. 301.

The

The majesty and dreadful grandeur of the Messiah rushing forward in his flaming car, in order to execute upon the apostate angels the vengeance of the Almighty Father, is very conspicuous in the in the following sublime passage.

At once the four spread out their starry wings,
With dreadful shade contiguous, and the orbs
Of his fierce chariot rowl'd, as with the sound
Of torrent floods, or of a numerous host.
He on his impious foes right onward drove,
Gloomy as night: under his burning wheels
The stedfast empyrean shook throughout;
All but the throne itself of God. Book vi. l. 827.

In this description Milton seems to have had in his eye the chariot represented to Ezekiel in a vision, and perhaps the ascent of Jupiter from Mount Ida, of which however it cannot be properly called an imitation, since he hath rather rivalled than imitated Homer.

In the following book the Messiah appears in awful, but milder majesty, cloathed in the splendor of his father's glory, and
attended

attended with an innumerable host of angels, preparing to execute the great undertaking assigned him by the Almighty, the creation of the world. The natural sublimity of Milton's Genius has in this part of the poem been aided by the Mosaic account of the creation, and by that simple, yet sublime relation of our Saviour's quelling a tempest at sea by his authoritative command. The powerful mandate by which the commotions of the deep and dark abyss are stilled previous to the work of creation, is uttered with all the solemnity and authority of the Creator.

Silence ye troubled waves ! and thou deep peace !

Said then th' omnific word, your discord end.

Book vii. l. 216.

The description of Satan raising his enormous bulk from the fiery lake, and afterwards expanding his wings for flight, is completely original, at the same time that it is remarkably picturesque and sublime.

Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool

His mighty stature: on each hand the flames

Driv'n

Driv'n backward slope their pointing spires, and rowl'd
 In billows leave i'th' midst a horid vale.
 Then with expanded wings he steers his flight
 Aloft, incumbent on the dusky air,
 That felt unusual weight.

Book i. l. 221.

This passage affords a very striking example of the perfection of poetic painting, which exhibits the figures it portrays with almost as much vivacity to the imagination as if they were set before our eyes.

With regard to those general but essential characteristics of original Genius, insisted on in the preceding book, an irregular greatness, wildness, and enthusiasm of imagination, we have abundance of examples of them in *Paradise Lost*.

As instances of all these qualities united together we may adduce the dreadful downfall of Satan and his compeers from the battlements of heaven.

Him th' Almighty power
 Hurl'd headlong flaming through th' ethereal sky
 With hideous ruin and combustion down
 To bottomless perdition; there to dwell

In

In adamantinè chains and penal fire,

Who durst defy the Omnipotence to arms.

Book i. l. 44

We may likewise add their posture on the burning lake, particulrally that of Satan, the amazing and expeditious structure of Pandæmonium, the towering flight of the archfiend through the “*dun air sublime*” and the dark formless regions of Chaos, together with the dreadful battles of the angels, all which surprizing incidents, at the same time that they shew the utmost fertility of invention, are likewise striking examples of an *irregular wildness, greatness and enthusiasm* of imagination.

The last remark which we made in the section on *original* poetic Genius, that this quality will discover itself in *allegories*, in *visions*, or in the creation of *ideal* characters of one species or another, is very particularly and eminently confirmed by the sublime track that Milton hath pursued in *Paradise Lost*, in which he hath not only presented a variety

variety of the most astonishing visionary scenes to the imagination, but likewise exhibited supernatural Beings of incomparable dignity, created by the mere force of his own great and unbounded Genius.

S E C T. VI.

O F A R I O S T O.

IN order to render the design of this essay more complete, we thought it might not be improper to subjoin a few remarks upon the characters of two of the most eminent foreign Poets, Tasso and Ariosto; whose respective merit we shall not attempt to display at any very considerable length, judging it sufficient for our purpose to give a general idea of their different poetic talents, as exerted in those walks of Genius we have above considered. We shall begin with Ariosto, whom many of his countrymen, it should seem, very unjustly prefer to his rival and contemporary Tasso*.

His talent in the *invention* of incidents claims our first attention.

* The translator of the Orlando Furioso, informs us, that after long disputes among several learned universities in Italy, concerning the comparative poetical merit of Ariosto and Tasso, the preference was at last unanimously assigned

Were we to regard this species of invention as the sole characteristic of original Poetic Genius, or even as the chief ingredient in its composition, and to estimate the merit of Ariosto by this standard, we ought doubtless to assign him the highest rank in the scale of Genius, and to consider him as the greatest Poet that ever existed.

But we have already shewn that the power of *inventing* incidents, though an ingredient in the composition of original poetic Genius, is not the most essential one, nor its most distinguishing criterion*, and that the creation of uncommon characters, especially such as are supernatural, requires a stronger effort of Genius than the *invention* of any incidents whatever. Of this last we find an immense variety in the Orlando Furioso, which is upon the whole a very extraordinary work, though it is difficult to conceive upon what

assigned to the former. We shall not enter into a dispute upon this point with those learned bodies; though notwithstanding their authoritative testimony, we make no scruple to declare our superior admiration of Tasso.

* Book ii. sect. 3.

plan the author has conducted it. This poem, properly speaking, is neither epic nor allegorical, and yet it participates of some of the qualities essential to both. It possesses all the dignity of the narration and action of the epic muse, but is utterly destitute of that unity of action, time, and place, which is necessary to constitute a regular and legitimate epic poem. On the other hand it exhibits much of the wildness and marvellousness of allegory; and though the author does not often appear to have intended it, we may frequently draw a hidden and figurative meaning from the wonderful events which he relates. The truth is, the *Orlando Furioso*, considered altogether, appears like a mass of matter composed of heterogeneous and discordant parts*. It consists

* When we consider the strange medley of unconnected events related in the *Orlando Furioso*, the question which the Cardinal d'Este put to Ariosto, *Ove diavolo, messer Lodovico hai trovato tante coglionerie?* Where the devil, Lewis, could you find such trumpery? appears no way unnatural.

of a jumble of incoherent adventures, enchantments and exploits, begun and interrupted, resumed and pursued, as fancy or whim dictated; in the representation of which the author at one time excites our curiosity and interests our passions; at another wantonly disappoints the one and breaks the other, merely from the capricious pleasure, it should seem, of perplexing and irritating the minds of his readers. Our countryman Spenser has frequently imitated the Italian poet in this absurd practice. The reader must not expect that I should attempt to digest such a chaos of *incidents* as is to be met with in the Orlando Furioso into any kind of order; or that I should so much as present him with the shortest abstract of those incidents. I intend only to glance at a few of the most distinguishing which struck me in the perusal, as far as I can recollect them, for I must be excused from the trouble of searching out and connecting them, scattered as they are through the disjointed parts of this voluminous work.

The story of Bradamant's binding the magician Atlant, and relieving her lover Ruggier*, who had been long confined by that forcerer in his castle, in order to elude the danger to which his destiny exposed him, has probably suggested to Spenser the adventure of Britomart, in which she relieves Amoret from the enchantments of the forcerer Busirane†. Bradamant however soon looses all the advantage she had gained by her conquest of Atlant, for the enchanter vanishes, and he contrives it so that his winged horse Hippogryphe, after several fruitless attempts had been made by this lady to catch him, approaches to Ruggier, who mounts him, and is immediately carried off three thousand miles from his mistress at one stretch. This single incident will give the reader some idea of Ariosto's passion for the marvellous. The description of Alcina and her abode, in the sixth canto, will put the reader in mind of the Armida of Tasso,

* Cant. iv. † Fairy Queen, book iii. cant. 12.

and the Aerasia of Spenser. We know not whether Alcina or Armida be the original, but the description of the person and situation of Tasso's enchantress is certainly more picturesque and luxuriant than that of Ariosto's, which has likewise great merit. Spenser, we have already observed, hath very closely copied the former in the representation he has given us of the abode of Aerasia; and Tasso himself hath doubtless taken the first hint of his Armida from the Circe of Homer, though it must be confessed the imitation is in this case pretty distant, and the circumstances are varied very considerably. In this canto likewise we have a very wonderful relation of Astolfo's being shut up in a myrtle-tree which sends forth cries, a story either imitated from the myrtle tree inclosing a lady, and wounded by Tancred in the Jerusalem Delivered*, or which has given occasion to that imitation. The account given in the fifteenth canto, of Cali-

* Book xiii.

gorant the giant's being taken in his own net, is an imitation of the fiction in the *Odyssey* of Mars and Venus being caught in the net made by Vulcan, as the story of the Hure in the seventeenth canto is a copy of that of Polypheme. The relation which the author gives of the magician Orril's running after Astolpho in quest of his head, which he had cut off, is rather ludicrous than astonishing*; and the representation of the sudden dispersion of Astolpho's enemies by a single blast of his horn, is in the same taste†. The history of Orlando's madness however is quite of another kind. In developing this event the author has discovered uncommon strength of imagination. The cause of his madness is natural; its progress is gradual and affecting; and the catastrophe is highly wrought up‡. He soon relapses however into extravagant and childish fiction. Astolpho's horn serves him in excellent stead, and is instrumental in performing the greatest mi-

* Cant. 15. † Cant. 20. ‡ Cant. 23.

racles. Its effects in driving away the Harpies from the table of Senapus king of Nubia, and the duke's pursuit of them, till he drave them to the infernal regions, related in the thirty third canto, are certainly too much upon the marvellous stamp, and border upon the ludicrous. Aftolpho's journey to the Moon in the thirty fourth canto, under the conduct of St. John the Evangelist, is as extravagant a fiction as any of those above mentioned; but it is more poetical, and has something of that romantic wildness which characterizes a great Genius. The retreat of Ruggier and Bradamant, after their ineffectual rencounter in battle, to a sequestered valley, to which the lover was led by his mistress, in order to give him an opportunity of vindicating his conduct at his own importunate desire, is well contrived, though the design was for some time frustrated by Marphisa, who inflamed with rage upon account of the several defeats she had sustained from Bradamant, pursued that heroine in order to renew the combat with her, and

revenge

revenge the indignity she had suffered. The efforts of Ruggier to separate the two female warriors, naturally enough bring upon him the indignation of Marphisa, whose desperate attack of him, tended to convince Bradamant of the injurious suspicions she had entertained against her lover. The discovery of Ruggier and Marphisa to each other, by a supernatural voice issuing from the tomb, is surprising, and well timed, as it serves at once to reconcile the two combatants engaged in a dangerous encounter, who immediately recognize and embrace each other as brother and sister, and utterly to remove every shadow of suspicion from the mind of Bradamant to the prejudice of Ruggier, being assured of his fidelity by the voice above mentioned. The scene of this discovery is very happily laid; as the solitude of the place conspiring with the important and awful declaration sounded in their ears from a hollow tomb in the midst of the wood, produces a solemn attention and dread in the mind of the reader. The discovery of this supernatural

tural voice to be that of Atlante, who is thereby declared to have been the tutor of Ruggier and Marphisa, is evidently either the model or copy of the discovery made to Clorinda by her guardian in Jerusalem Delivered. Astolpho's miraculously converting the stones which he rolls down the hill into horses, which scour neighing through the fields completely caparisoned*, is an extravagantly wild fiction, and can no other way gratify the imagination than by exciting our laughter at the marvellousness of the author's relations. His restoring Orlando to his wits by applying a phial in which his senses were shut up, to his nose, is another incident of a very ludicrous kind†. Astolpho's applying the bladder which he received from St. John to the hole in the cave whence the south wind issued, and his confining it within this receptacle in such a manner as to prevent its raising the whirling sands of the desert, through which

* Cant. 38.

† Cant. 39.

he and the Nubian troops were to pass, the learned reader will immediately recollect to be a palpable imitation of the story in the *Odyssey*, of Ulysses having got from Æolus the winds shut up in a bag, in order to prevent his being shipwrecked. This fiction appears extravagant even upon Homer's principles of mythology in the *Odyssey*, but in the *Orlando Furioso* it is perfectly ridiculous and absurd. The last incident we shall mention is the transformation of the leaves of trees into ships of war of various sizes, effected by the wonder working Astolpho's throwing them into the sea, an event as miraculous as the metamorphosis of the stones into armed steeds, and both of them far removed beyond the utmost verge of credibility.

These few incidents, selected from a great number of a similar kind which we meet with in the *Orlando Furioso*, will give the reader some idea of Ariosto's talent in this species of *invention*. And indeed if originality and greatness of Genius is to be estimated by the number and marvellousness of incidents invented, it
can-

cannot be denied that Ariosto is superior to, and unrivalled by any of the divine Poets of whom we have been treating; but then it is on the other hand equally certain, that in this species of invention our author has his rivals, and those too among classes of persons whom one would scarce suspect to be distinguished by originality of Genius. The classes we have in our eye are those of nurses and old women, who are fond of the wonderful. Perhaps the reader may recollect that he has sometimes heard marvellous stories invented by such people with surprizing readiness, and not very unlike some of our Poet's fictions; the author at least can remember he has often been entertained with them.

These remarks naturally lead us to observe the justness and importance of a rule laid down by Aristotle for the conduct both of an epic and dramatic poem, and it is this; that the incidents invented should not only be surprizing but probable*. Without the

* Φανερὸν δὲ ἐκ τῶν ἱστοριῶν, καὶ ὅτι ὅτι τὰ γινόμενα λέγειν, ταῦτα ποιῆτε ἔργον εἶναι, ἀλλ' ὅτι αἱ γινώσκουσιν καὶ τὰ δυνατόν κατὰ τὸ εἶκος ἢ τὸ ἀπ' αἰτίας.

Arist. Poet. cap. ix.

first curiosity cannot be excited, without the last the mind cannot be interested. The imagination may indeed be amused by very improbable fictions, but they will take very little hold of the affections and the heart. It is for this reason that we do not commonly take a very deep interest in the issue of the adventures celebrated by Ariosto, though we ought to make several exceptions, some of which will be afterwards mentioned.

After all, let it be confessed that there are some fictions extremely improbable, which may nevertheless discover uncommon strength and exuberance of imagination. When such fictions have the characters of wildness and grandeur, as well as of improbability stamped upon them, we acknowledge them as the effusions of a great Genius, unchastised by proper discipline and culture. Many of the incidents in the Orlando Furioso are of this kind.

Several of Ariosto's characters are strongly marked. Orlando his great hero is distinguished by his unconquerable valour, by the enthusiasm of his chivalry, by the romantic extravagance

extravagance of his love for Angelica, and by its effects in overturning his reason. The character of Astolpho is a compound of bravery, generosity, and friendship. Brindimart interests us in his fate, by his heroism united with the ardor and tenderness of his affection for Flordilige. Rinaldo is generous, brave and impetuous. Leon is likewise characterized by an uncommon generosity and greatness of soul, discovered in the whole of his conduct to Ruggier, not only by rescuing him from imprisonment and death at the utmost hazard; but by resigning Bradamant to him after he had discovered that she was betrothed to Ruggier. The character of Rhodomont is a contrast to that of Leon; as his personal courage is sullied by the brutality, cruelty, and savage ferocity of his manners. Ruggier is the most accomplished of all Ariosto's heroes. He is celebrated not only for his superior prowess, but for the constancy of his love to Bradamant, for the fidelity of his friendship to Leon, and for the most delicate and affecting sentiments

ments of gratitude and honour, which determined him to resign his mistress and sacrifice his life from the sense he had of his obligations to his friend. The struggle betwixt gratitude and honour, friendship and love, is strongly marked in the conduct of Ruggier in the forty-fifth canto, when the proposal is made to him by Leon of undertaking the combat upon his account in disguise against Bradamant, in order to gain that Lady to him for his wife. The forty-sixth canto presents an affecting display of Ruggier's character. This hero is exhibited in a distant wood, voluntarily pining away with hunger, abandoned to grief and despair, from which he is relieved, when he is upon the point of expiring, by the unexampled generosity of Leon, whose character is represented in the most amiable light.

The third species of invention in which we shewed a Poet of original Genius will excel, was that of *images*, of which we shall adduce an example or two from the Orlando Furioso.

Angelica

Angelica having become the captive of barbarians, by whom she was to be sacrificed to a monster, Orlando is represented as deploring her melancholy and helpless situation in the following passage, in which, by the use of a very tender image, he gives us a lively and affecting idea both of her misfortunes and of his own misery upon account of them.

Deh, dove senza me, dolee mia vita,
 Rimasa sei sì giovane, e sì bella?
 Come poi che la luce è dispartita
 Riman tra boschi la smarrita agnella,
 Che dal pastor sperando esser udita
 Si via lagnando in questa parte, e in quella,
 Tanto ch'el lupo l'ode di lontano;
 E'l misero pastor ne piange in vano. Cant. viii. st. 76.

Ah ! in what region does my soul's delight,
 From me forlorn so young and lovely stay ?
 Like as the lambkin at approaching night,
 That wandring in the woods has lost its way,
 Hoping her voice the shepherd may invite,
 In plaintive bleating up and down does stray,
 Till to the distant wolf the sound is sent ;
 In vain the shepherd does his loss lament.

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The gradual subsiding of Bradamant's resentment against Ruggier, the grateful return of her affection for him, and the effects of his proposal of retiring with her from the combat, in order to explain the cause of his seeming indifference to her, are represented with great elegance and beauty, by the image of a warm south wind blowing upon the brooks, which had been freezed by the breath of winter.

Come à i meridional tepidi venti,
 Che spirano dal mare il fiato caldo,
 Le nevi si disciolgono e i torrenti,
 E il ghiaccio, che pur dianzi era sì saldo;
 Così a quei preghi, a quei brevi lamenti
 Il cor de la forella di Rinaldo
 Subito ritorno pietoso, e molle,
 Che'l ira, più che marmo, indurar volle.

Cant. xxxvi. st. 40.

As to the tepid southern winds which blow
 With their warm breath o'er surface of the main,
 The ice which was so hard before, the snow,
 The frozen brooks dissolve themselves to rain,
 At these short plaints, at these intreaties, so
 Rinaldo's sister's heart returns again
 Suddenly soft, mov'd with compassion,
 Which anger render'd had more hard than stone.

We

We meet with several sublime and pathetic sentiments likewise scattered through different parts of the Orlando Furioso.

The abrupt address to the Almighty, in which the Poet implores him to receive the departing soul of Brandimart among the heavenly host, is an example of true sublimity of sentiment, at the same time that it is a refined stroke of the pathetic, as it intimates to us at once that the wound which the Christian hero had received from Gradass by surprize, while he was just upon the point of killing the African king, was mortal.

Padre del ciel, dà fra gli detti tuoi
Spiriti luogo al marter tuo fedele;
Che giunto al fin de tempestosi suoi
Viaggi, in porto omai legà le vele.
Ah! Durindana, dunque esser tu puoi
Al tuo signore Orlando sì crudele,
Che la più grate compagnia, e più fida,
Ch' egli abbia al mondo, innanzi tu gli uccida?

Cant. xli. st. 100.

Father of heaven! amidst your chosen host
Of spirits, your just martyr place allow,

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Who

Who ends his voyages by tempests tost,
 And in the haven binds his sails up now.
 Ah! Durindan, couldst thou then be dispos'd
 Thy lord Orland such cruelty to show!
 That his companion dearest and most true
 I'th' world he had, you thus before him flew!

Our Poet had interested us greatly in the fate of Brandimart, by his previous description of the mutual ardor and tenderness of affection expressed by him and Flordilige to each other, especially in their last interview, which renders his untimely death much more affecting. The lamentation of Flordilige after she had been informed of her lover's death is likewise very pathetic*, as is that of Orlando†, both which bear a pretty strong resemblance to the lamentations of Priam's family over the dead body of Hector, in the twenty third book of the Iliad.

It is impossible to read the description of Olympia's situation, abandoned by her perfidious lover on a desolate coast, without

* Cant. xliii. st. 162, 163. † St. 170, 171, 173.

feeling

feeling the strongest emotions of sympathy for the unfortunate lady who had been treated with such barbarous cruelty.

E con la faccia in quì stesa sùl' letto,
Bagnandola di planto dicca lui :
Jerlera desti insieme à dui ricetto,
Perchè insieme al levar non siamo dui ?
O Perfido Bireno, O maladetto,
Giorno, ch'al mondo generata fui ;
Che debbo far ? che poss'io far quì sola ?
Chi mi dà aiuto, oime ! chi mi consola ?

Cant. x. st. 27.

And casting on the couch her visage low,
Bathing it o'er with tears, she to it spoke ;
Last night you kind reception gave to two,
Why then two were we not when we awoke ?
Oh ! faithless Brien ! Oh ! curst day of woe !
That from my mother's womb me wretched took.
What should I do. What can I here alone.
Who'll give me comfort ? Whence alas ! can help be
shown ?

Her invocation of the wild beasts to destroy her, in order to deliver her from a more deplorable fate, an ignominious and miserable servitude, is deeply affecting, and rises

likewise to a very considerable pitch of sublimity.

Deh pur, che da color, che vanno in corso,
 Jo non fui presa, e poi venduta schiava,
 Prima che questo, il lupo, il leon, l'orso
 Venga e la tigre, e ogn'altra fera brava;
 Di cui l'ugna mi stracci, e franga il morso,
 E morta mi strascini à la sua cava,
 Così dicendo le mani si caccia
 Ne capei d'oro, e à chiocca à chiocea straccia.

Cant. x. st. 33.

Oh! lest I should be seiz'd by some corsair,
 Who ravage o'er the coasts, and sold a slave,
 Come every wolf and lion, horrid bear,
 Ye greedy tygers, come, each savage brave
 Crush with your fangs, with claws my body tear,
 And drag me breathless to your deadly cave:
 Thus having spake, her furious hands she clench'd
 Into her golden locks, and off them wrench'd.

The Orlando Furioso affords many examples of vivid and picturesque description, as well as of sublime and pathetic sentiment, of which we shall present the reader with one or two instances.

The description of Olympia's situation,
 after

after she had been abandoned by the faithless Biren, at one time represented as running along the strand like a fury, at another time as gazing after him over the sea in silent and agonizing grief, is particularly vivid and affecting.

Corre di nuovo in sù l'estrema sabbia,
E ruota il capo, e sparge à l'aria il crine,
E sembra forsennata, e ch' addosso abbia,
Non un demonio sol, ma le decine,
O qual Ecuba, sia conversa in rabbia,
Vistosi morto Polidore al fine.
Or si ferma sù un sasso, e guarda il mare;
Ne men d'un vero sasso un sasso pare.

Cant. x. st. 34.

She ran again along the winding strand,
Rowling her head, and cast her locks in air,
And seem'd distracted, or as if a band
Of evil spirits had pursued her there;
Or like to Hecuba, with rage crack-brain'd,
When her dead son she saw, in wild despair,
Now seated on a stone, gaz'd o'er the sea,
And senseless fix'd, a stone she seem'd to be.

Ariosto has thrown an air of terrible grandeur into the following description of the

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appearance

appearance of the king of Algiers assaulting the fortress of his enemies, though he is not quite so tremendous a hero as Achilles is represented in the twenty second book of the Iliad.

Sta sù la porta il Re d'Algier lucente
 Di chiaro acciar, cha'l capo gli arma e'l busto ;
 Come uscito di tenebre serpente,
 Poi c'ha lasciato ogni squallor vetusto
 Del nuovo scoglio altiero, e che si sente
 Ringiovenito, e più che mai robusto :
 Tre lingue vibra, ha ne gli occhi fuoco :
 Dovunque passa ogn' animal dà loco.

Cant. xvii. st. 11.

Before the gate, shining in steely spark,
 Stood th' Algier king, arm'd his bust and head ;
 Just as the serpent issuing from the dark,
 Soon as all his former skin has shed,
 Proud of his new got scales, and does remark
 That he's more strong than e'er, renovated,
 Shouts his three tongues, and in his eyes has fire,
 Where'er he goes all animals retire.

With regard to the last mentioned characteristic of original Genius in Poetry, which was an irregular greatness, wildness, and enthusiasm

enthusiasm of imagination, we meet with very conspicuous examples of it in the Orlando Furioso, as hath sufficiently appeared from the incidents we have selected from this work.

The marvellous fictions of magicians and enchantresses, and other ideal characters scattered throughout the Orlando Furioso, and particularly the journey of Astolpho to the moon, and his visions of Paradise, are incontestible proofs of the strong propensity of this Poet's Genius to the creation of imaginary scenes, persons and events, by which we shewed every truly original Genius in Poetry will be remarkably distinguished.

S E C T-

S E C T. VII.

Of T A S S O.

WE shall next examine the merit of Tasso, the rival and countryman of Ariosto, as it appears in the *Jerusalem Delivered*, his capital performance.

If Tasso hath not invented so great a number of incidents as Ariosto, he hath however invented a sufficient variety of these, and as they are in their own nature more important, so they are digested with much greater regularity in the *Gierusalemme Liberata* than in the *Orlando Furioso*. Let us just glance at the principal incidents in the former.

The appearance of Gabriel, sent by the Almighty to persuade Godfrey to call a council of the chiefs, in order to elect a supreme commander, is a well invented machine

machine,* as the message he delivers is happily adapted both to convince that hero of the importance of uniting their forces under the direction of one leader, and to inspire Godfrey himself, who is informed by the angel that he is destined by heaven to the command of the Christian army, with confidence of success. It is judiciously contrived by the Poet, that the interview betwixt Tancred and Clorinda in the third book should be interrupted by a general encounter of the two armies, as this interruption serves to inflame the passion of Tancred, and to give a fuller display of his character, at the same time that it affords room to introduce a series of events, which render the fate of Clorinda more deeply affecting. Erminia's pointing out and describing to Aladine the several Christian leaders, † the reader will observe to be an imitation of Homer, who in his *Iliad* hath represented Helen as pointing out the

* Book i.

† Book iii.

Græcian chiefs to Priam from the walls of Troy. The fourth book opens with the summons of the infernal council, and with the convention of those malevolent beings, the description of which is calculated to impress the mind of the reader with horror, together with the speech of Pluto their sovereign, which is perfectly characteristic, and suitable to the superior dignity and unconquerable pride of this prince of Hell. Tasso's representation of this infernal assembly doubtless suggested the Pandæmonium of Milton, and the dreadful concourse of Satan and his compeers in this wonderful fabric. The account of the enchantress Armida's being sent by her uncle Hidraotes king of Damascus, who was at the same time a magician to the Christian camp, in order to seduce the principal leaders, and engage them in her interest by a feigned story of her misfortunes, is not only interesting in the event, as it tends to shew the influence of female blandishment over the human heart, but is a judiciously contrived

trived incident, in order to weaken the Christian army by drawing of their chief heroes; and the first suggestion of it to Hidraotes is with great propriety attributed to one of the fiends of hell. The quarrel betwixt Rinaldo and Gernando in the fifth book, concerning the command of the warriors who had engaged in the interest of Armida, is an imitation, considerably varied however, of the quarrel betwixt Agamemnon and Achilles in the first book of the Iliad, as Rinaldo's departure from the army in resentment of Godfrey's intention of bringing him to a trial upon account of his having killed Gernando, will put the reader in mind of Achilles abandoning the Græcian army, upon account of their general's detention of his female captive. The challenge of Argantes, and the combat betwixt this chief and Tancred in the following book, is a copy of that betwixt Hector and Ajax in the sixth book of the Iliad. Erminia's disguising herself in the armour of Clorinda, and her going in that armour in quest

quest of Tancred, are interesting incidents in themselves, and are rendered more particularly interesting by the danger to which this lady is exposed of being taken prisoner by an advanced guard of the Christians; though in the invention of this incident, the Poet seems to have had in his eye Virgil's admired episode of Nisus and Euryalus. Erminia's reception by the shepherd in the seventh book forms an exquisitely pleasing scene, and is a delightful contrast to the horrors of war which precede it. Tancred pursuing Erminia in the disguise of Clorinda very naturally falls into Armida's snares. * The disaffection spread through the Christian troops in the eighth book by the seditious harangue of Argillan affords an opportunity to the Poet of displaying the prudence, resolution and fortitude of the general, in quelling the disaffection and popular tumult occasioned by this harangue. The ninth

* Book vii.

book presents us with a variety of well invented and truly grand machinery. That of Michael in particular, as well as of the Fury Allecto, though of a different kind, are wonderfully striking. In the tenth book the Poet, from a fondness for the operations of magic, hath perhaps indulged himself too far in the licence of fiction, when he makes the magician Ismeno (in a great measure unnecessarily, as it should seem) convey Solyman in an enchanted chariot to Jerusalem, while he was upon the way to Gaza. *

* It is very difficult to ascertain the utmost verge of probability in Epic Poetry, beyond which a Poet cannot venture to penetrate, without justly incurring the imputation of wild and extravagant fiction. The imagination may be highly pleased with fictions, that will appear incredible and absurd to cool impartial judgment. One rule however in Epic Poetry, equally important and indisputable, is, that the general strain of invention be founded upon popular opinion, or at least upon popular tradition. This is necessary, and is all that is necessary, to constitute poetic probability; but we are often at a loss to determine how far popular credulity
may

The solemn procession of the Christians in the eleventh book, and the miraculous cure of Godfrey's wound by an angel, are imitations of Homer. The nocturnal expe-

may extend. In the age of Tasso the inhabitants of Europe in general were certainly more credulous than in the present, and the powers of magic, now justly excluded, had taken the sanction of vulgar tradition, and in a great measure of vulgar belief; circumstances which will for the most part vindicate those fictions in the *Jerusalem Delivered*, which to a modern critic may appear extravagant and absurd. Whatever advantages may have accrued to mankind in general, from the ground which reason has gained on superstition and credulity; Poetry, it is certain, hath sustained an irreparable loss from the acquisition since by this means those enchantments which are calculated at once to please, astonish and terrify the imagination are utterly banished from all the haunts of the Muses. Those who are desirous to perceive the effects of these supernatural operations in Poetry, may peruse the fifteenth, sixteenth and eighteenth books of the *Jerusalem Delivered*, where the Poet, by introducing the grandest and most awful machinery of angels, dæmons and apparitions, makes the reader in some measure to feel the power of the enchantments they are employed to effectuate.

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dition of Argantes and Clorinda in the twelfth book, in order to burn the tower of the Christians, is an imitation of that of Ulysses and Diomed in the Iliad. The discovery of Clorinda in the same book, after she had been mortally wounded by the hand of Tancred, her death, and the distracting grief of her lover by whom she had been slain, are all of them incidents extremely interesting, and deeply pathetic. The machinery of the dæmons, raised by the power of Ismeno in the thirteenth book makes a conspicuous figure. The incantations and adjurations of this magician are remarkably awful and solemn; the appearances in the enchanted wood are very terrific, and the description both of the nature and offices of those dæmons is highly picturesque. In the fourteenth book the recal of Rinaldo is very properly effected by the earnest intreaties of his relations, concurring with a supernatural intimation, which Godfrey had received in a dream to this

X

purpose.

purpose. The fifteenth and sixteenth books, which contain the account of the voyage and adventures of Charles and Ubald, who had gone in quest of Rinaldo, exhibit a rich fund of entertainment to the imagination, abound with the most enchanting description, and shew an amazing fertility of invention in the author. The schemes of revenge meditated by Armida* in the fury of her despair, occasioned by the loss of Rinaldo, are the natural effects of disappointed love in its extreme. In the eighteenth book, the author has risen to a track of the most sublime and rich invention. The description of the different scenes and appearances presented to Rinaldo is remarkably picturesque, at the same time that a great part of the fiction is extravagantly wild. Michael's appearing to Godfrey during the assault of the city, and his shewing him the celestial army and the Christian warriors who had been slain before the

* Book xvii.

walls of Jerusalem engaged on his side, are great incidents and add incomparable dignity to the action of the poem. The nineteenth and twentieth books are full of action, and abound with the most important and interesting incidents. In the former Argantes is slain by Tancred, who had renewed the combat with him; and great slaughter is made among the enemy by the unconquerable Rinaldo. In the latter the Egyptian army is defeated, Solymon and many others of the principal heroes among the enemy are killed by Rinaldo, who pursues and has an affecting interview with Armida, and the city is at last taken by the Christian general, which concludes the action of the Jerusalem Delivered. From this slight enumeration of the principal incidents in the above-mentioned poem the reader will perceive, that as these are in their own nature truly important, as well as sufficiently diversified, so they are calculated to awaken curiosity, to raise astonishment, and to interest our passions in the highest degree.

Tasso hath likewise succeeded admirably in the invention and proper display of characters, as well as in the invention and arrangement of incidents. His characters are drawn by the hand of a master. They are justly delineated at the same time that they are uniformly supported. Mr. Voltaire in this respect gives him the preference to Homer.* He expressly asserts that the characters of Tasso are more skilfully introduced, more strongly marked, and infinitely better sustained; that there is scarce one in the *Iliad* that is not inconsistent with itself, and not one in the *Jerusalem* that is not uniform throughout. He acknowledges that the *Jerusalem Delivered* appears to be in some respects an imitation of the *Iliad*; but maintains, that if Godfrey is drawn after Agamemnon, and Rinaldo after Achilles, the copy is much superior to the original. This is unquestionably a very bold assertion; and as it is a very singular one, Mr. Voltaire may be thought

* See his *Essay on Epic Poetry*.

to have advanced it with an unbecoming confidence, as he has not particularly illustrated the grounds of this preference. We shall not here attempt to discuss the comparative merit of Homer and Tasso in the just exhibition of characters. The merit of both Poets in this, as well as in every other distinguishing exertion of Genius in the epopæa is indisputable; nor can it with any justice be alledged, that though Homer hath upon some occasions violated the uniformity of character, as for instance, in making Hector fly from Achilles, “there is scarce therefore a character in the Iliad that is not inconsistent with itself.” To me at least, the character of Achilles, the principal hero, to mention no more, appears to be perfectly consistent; and it is a compound of the following ingredients, valour, friendship, ferocity, cruelty and revenge, each in its several extreme. On the other hand it ought to be observed, that though the characters of Godfrey and Rinaldo are in genuine excellence superior to those of Agamemnon

and Achilles, from which they seem to be imitated, it does not for this reason follow that they are drawn with greater justness and mastery than their originals. The chief merit of a painter consists in exhibiting a faithful resemblance of the objects he would represent, whatever these may be, though we at the same time readily allow, that a good history painter is, in point of Genius, much superior to a good limner. With regard to Homer, his characters were no doubt partly copied from the life, partly created by his own imagination, and framed in such a manner as to accomplish the end for which he wrote. Tasso on the contrary intended to present us with more perfect models of excellence, an intention which a more advanced state of society, and of consequence a greater diversity of manners, as well as more enlarged experience, enabled him to accomplish. Hence it is that Tasso hath given us more complete portraits, but not a truer likeness than Homer. But to return from this digression, into which we were
led

led by the above remarks of Mr. Voltaire, we may observe, that in the character of Godfrey we have a pattern of civil and military virtue. This hero is celebrated for his piety, his equity, his wisdom, his moderation, and his fortitude. Rinaldo, in military prowess, is superior to all. He is particularly distinguished by an impetuous and irresistible valour, by that generosity of mind, so becoming a hero, by a nice sense of honour, by an impatience of injury or affront, and in general by that violence of passion which is natural to youthful ardour unabated by cool reflection. It is a curious speculation to observe the different expressions of the same passion in Rinaldo and Achilles. Rinaldo, inflamed with resentment against Gernando, upon account of the unjust reproaches he had thrown upon his conduct, takes instant vengeance on the slanderer by killing him on the spot. Achilles, no less inflamed against Agamemnon upon account of the detention of his fair captive,

retires from the army with indignant disdain and implacable revenge, enjoying the misfortunes of his countrymen. Rinaldo having at once satiated his resentment by the blood of the unhappy wretch who had roused it, leaves the army at the importunity of his friends, but returns with pleasure upon the first call to the aid of the Christian troops, Achilles, regardless of the interests of his country, and deaf to the importunity of friendship, beholds the defeats and disgrace of the Greeks with sullen satisfaction, without ever feeling an inclination to assist them, till he is roused to revenge by the death of his friend. We may add, that after Achilles appears in the field, we are dazzled and astonished with his exploits; when Rinaldo is restored to the army, we admire his prowess in battle; the former is the more terrible, the latter the more amiable hero. Tancred is the second hero to Rinaldo. His character is distinguished by an undaunted fortitude, by a certain magnanimity of spirit, by a friendship for Rinaldo void of envy, and above
all,

all, by his unfortunate passion for Clorinda. His character in this last mentioned respect is finely discriminated from that of his friend. Rinaldo, with a heart strongly susceptible of love, feels a still more ardent passion for military fame. Tancred likewise, highly emulous of glory, but still more the votary of love, resigns himself in a great measure to its dominion. Rinaldo required the power of enchantment to subject his heart to the empire of love. Tancred yielded his easy willing heart to its grateful sway. The sixth book presents us with a striking display of the character of Tancred. While he is upon the point of entering the lists with Argantes in combat, he obtains an unexpected view of Clorinda, and heedless of the calls of honour or the prize of valour, he resigns himself for a moment to the sweet enchanting deliriums of love, advancing towards the spot where this heroine stood; till observing Otho stepping into his place and encountring his antagonist, he is at once roused from his reverie, and claims the glory

as well as danger of the combat, as his rightful privilege.

The character of Raymond is highly respectable. He possesses the most valuable qualities of Nestor and Ulysses united together. He is sage without loquacity, and prudent without cunning. Though verging to old age, he joins the ardor of the youthful warrior to the cool deliberation of wise experience.

Argantes bears some resemblance to the Ajax of Homer, but differs from him in several essential qualities. Like Ajax he is of an enormous size, and possessed of intrepid fortitude; but he is distinguished from him by a boastful ferocity, and arrogance peculiar to himself. Solyman however appears to be the principal hero of the enemy. He is brave, haughty, and impatient of controul; overbearing in his pride, and implacable in his resentment. He is particularly characterized by the most inveterate and unrelenting hatred of the christian name.

Clorinda may be thought to be an imitation

tion of the Camilla of Virgil; but there is really scarce any other resemblance than that of their being two eminent female warriors. The character of the former is more enterprizing and more spirited than that of the latter. The dreadful combat of Clorinda with Tancred, the deplorable fate of this heroine, her sudden conversion to christianity, and her tender regard manifested to Tancred with her expiring breath, as well as by visiting him in a dream after her dissolution, present us all together with such a new and affecting discovery of her character, as to render it truly original.

Erminia is a true feminine character, made up of sensibility and tenderness. She is distinguished by the constancy and fervour of her love to Tancred, which prompted her to expose herself to imminent danger, by going in quest of him through a hostile camp.

These are the principal characters in the *Jerusalem Delivered*, characters which Tasso hath developed with much judgment, as well as with uncommon strength of imagination.

Let

Let us next adduce a few examples of his talent in the *invention* of the *images* of Poetry. The noise of the fiends of hell at the breaking up of their infernal assembly, when they were preparing to execute their meditated vengeance on the christian army, is very happily compared to the sound of tempests bursting as it were from their places of confinement.

Come sonanti e torbide procelle,
 Che vengon fuor de la natie lor grotte
 Ad 'oscurar il Cielo à portar guerra
 Ai gran regni del mare, e de la terra
 Tosto spiegando in vari lati i vanni,
 Si furon questi per lo mondo sparti :

C. 4. ft. 18. l. 5.

As founding tempests, with impetuous force,
 Burst from their native caves with furious course,
 To blot the lustre of the gladsome day,
 And pour their vengeance on the land and sea :
 So these from realm to realm their pinions spread
 And o'er the world their baneful venom shed.

Book. iv. l. 143.

Though the lion hath furnished both ancient and modern Poets with many different
 images

images founded on his different properties and appearances; and though Homer in particular hath compared the stern ferocity of his heroes, their bold and resolute assaults in battle, or their slow reluctance in a retreat to such attributes in this king of the savage tribe as correspond to those various qualities, yet we do not remember to have seen the particular property of this animal alluded to in the following passage, applied by any other Poet than Tasso to the same object to which it there refers, intending to give us an idea of the confusion and terror that seized Argillan (who had raised a mutiny among the troops) on the first appearance of Godfrey in sceptred majesty, he thus expresses it by a well adapted image.

Così leon, ch' anzi l' horribil coma
 Con muggito scotia superbo, e fero;
 Se poi vede il ministro onde fù donca
 La natia feritadel core altero;
 Può del giogo soffrir l'ignobil soma,
 E teme le minaccie, e'l duro impero:
 Ne i gran velli e grand denti e l'unghie e'hanno,
 Tanta in se forza, insuperbire il fanno.

Cant. viii. st. 83.

S₂

So when his shaggy main a lion shakes;
 And with loud roar his slumb'ring fury wakes;
 If chance he views the man whose soothing art
 First tam'd the fierceness of his lofty heart:
 His pride consents th' ignoble yoke to wear;
 He fears the well known voice and rule severe:
 Vain are his claws, his dreadful teeth are vain,
 He yields submissive to his keeper's chain

Book viii. l. 616.

Our idea of the enormous size and dreadful grandeur of Pluto is greatly heightened by a variety of sublime images. Speaking of his bulk, he says,

Ne pur calpe s'inalza ò'l magno Atlante,
 Eh' anzi lui non pareffe un picciol colle
 Si la gran fronte, e la gran corna estolle.

Cant. iv. st. 6. l. 6.

Even tow'ring Atlas that supports the sky
 A hillock if compared with him appears,
 When his large front and ample horns he rears.

Book iv. l. 46.

His eyes are with great propriety as well as sublimity compared to the blaze of a comet.

Rosséggian gli occhi, e di veneno infetto,
 Come infauusta cometa, il guargo splende.

Cant. iv. st. 7. l. 3.

His

His sanguine eyes with baneful venom stare,
And like a comet cast a dismal glare. l. 51.

His mouth open is likewise represented by
a great as well as just image.

E in guisa di voragine profonda,
S'apre la bocca d'atro sangue immonde.
Cant. iv. st. 7. l. 7.

And like a whirlpool in the roaring flood
Wide gapes his mouth obscene with clotted blood.
l. 55.

The image which follows is in the same
taste, and though it is not entirely new, the
application of it is, as far as we remember,
perfectly original.

Qual' i fumi s'esfurei et infiammati,
Escon di Mongibello, e'l puzzo, e'l tuono;
Tal de la fera bocca i negri fiati,
Tale il fetore, e la faville sono.
Cant. iv. St. 8. l. 1.

As smoky fires from burning Ætna rise,
And steaming sulphur that infects the skies;
So from his throat the cloudy sparkles came,
With pestilential breath and ruddy flame. l. 57.

The reader will perceive from these few
images

images relating to the appearance of Pluto, that he is altogether a very striking figure; though he cannot at the same time fail to observe that Milton has improved upon the Italian Poet (to whose sublime description of this prince of hell perhaps he was in some degree indebted) as Satan is represented in still more terrible majesty than Pluto, and our idea of the size, power and exploits of the former, is not only more distinct, but even more aggrandized than that of the latter: in order to be convinced of this, we need only to refer him to the passages quoted from *Paradise Lost* in a preceding section. We meet likewise with several sublime and with many pathetic sentiments scattered up and down through the *Jerusalem Delivered*. Of the former kind is that address of Solyman to Alesto, after he had experienced the fury which that fiend had breathed into his soul, inciting him to dreadful slaughter.

O tu, che furor tanto al cor m' irriti :

Ned 'huom sei già, se ben sembiante humano

Mostrasti :

Mostrasti : ecco is ti seguo, ove m' inviti.
 Verrò farrò la monti, ov' hora e piano,
 Monti d'huomini estinti e di feriti :
 Faro fiumi di sangue ; hor tu sia meco,
 E reggi l' arme mie per l'aer cieco.

Cant. 9. st. 12. l. 2.

O thou ! whose fury thus my heart inflames ;
 Whose hidden power a human power bely'd ;
 Behold I follow thee my potent guide !
 A mound shall rise where now appears a plain,
 A dreadful mound of christian heroes slain :
 The field shall float with blood : O grant thy aid !
 And lead my squadrons through the dusky shade.

Book ix. l. 90.

Ubaldo and Charles, in their voyage to the
 enchanted island of Armida under the con-
 duct of their female pilot, having had Car-
 thage pointed out to them, the poet exclaims
 in the following sublime apostrophe,

Giau l'alta Cartago : à pena i segni
 De l'alte sue ruine il lido serba.
 Muoiono le citta muoiono i regni :
 Copre i fasti, e le pompe arona et herba :
 E l'huom d' esser mortal par che sisdegni :
 O nostra mente cupida e superba !

Cant. xv. st. 20. l. 1.

Ill fated Carthage ! scarce amidst the plains,
 A trace of all her ruin'd pomp remains !
 Proud cities vanish, states and realms decay,
 The world's unstable glories fade away !
 Yet mortals dare of certain fate complain,
 O impious folly of presuming man !

Book. xv. l. 141.

The respective situations of Erminia, of Tancred and Clorinda, of Rinaldo and Armida, give occasion to many very pathetic sentiments, of which we must content ourselves with presenting a few examples. Tancred having after a long and bloody conflict killed Clarinda (in disguise) of whom he was enamoured ; and having through loss of blood and excess of grief fallen into a swoon, breaks out into the following affecting exclamation upon his recovery from it.

Io vivo ? io spiro ancora ? e gli odiosi
 Rai meo ancor di questo infausto die ?
 Ahi man timida, e lenta, hor che non osi,
 Tu ch'è sai tutte del ferir le v'è,
 Tu ministra di morte, empia et infame,
 Di questa vita rea troncar lo stame ?

Cant. 12. st. 75. l. 1. — 3 &c.
 And

And do I live! — And do I yet survey
 The hated beams of this unhappy day?
 Ah! coward hands! to righteous vengeance flow!
 Though deeply vers'd in every murderous blow.

Book 12. l. 568.

Upon surveying the dead body of Clorinda
 placed near his tent, his sorrow is excited
 afresh, and he gives vent to it in the language
 of heart rending grief.

—— O vifo che puoi far la morte
 Dolee, ma raddoleir non puoi mia forte.
 O bella destra, che'l soave pigno
 D'amicitia, e di pacesà me porgesti;
 Quali hor (laffo) vi trovo? e qual ne vegno?
 E voi leggiadre membra, hor non fon questi
 Del meo serino e fulcrato sdegno
 Vestigi miserabile, e funesti?

Cant. 12. st. 18. l. 7.

O sight! that e'en to death can sweetness give,
 But cannot now alas! my grief relieve!
 O! thou dear hand that once to mine was press'd,
 The pledge of amity and peace confess'd;
 What art thou now? alas! how chang'd in death!
 And what am I that still prolong my breath?
 Behold those lovely limbs in ruin laid!
 The dreadful work my impious rage has made.

Book. 12, l. 612.

But there is no part of the whole poem in which there appears a greater variety of conflicting passions than in the sixteenth book, after Armida is abandoned by her lover Rinaldo. She seems to have been actuated on this occasion by all the emotions which can agitate, and by all the passions which can tear the human heart: Love, jealousy, hatred, honour, shame, revenge and grief, appear to be united in her sentiments in their fiercest extremes. After having recovered her speech, of which she had been for some time deprived, by the astonishment and despair which seized her on the first notice of Rinaldo's departure, she runs after her lover, and exclaims with the most affecting importunity and tenderness.

O tu, che porte
 Teco parte di me, parte ne lassi;
 O'prendi l'una ò rendi l'altra, ò morte
 Dà insieme ad ambe arresta, arresta i passi,
 Sol che ti fian le'voci ultime porte!

Cant. xvi. st. 40. l. 1.

O thou! who bearst away my dearest heart,
 Who robbst me of my best, my dearest part,

O!

O ! give me death,— or once again restore
My murder'd peace,— thy hasty flight give o'er !
Hear my last words ! Book xvi l. 283.

Rinaldo having stopped his course, and resolved to give her an audience, she endeavours to regain her lost empire over his heart, by touching upon every circumstance which could awaken his pity or his love. After telling him that she did not now address him as a lover, she very artfully reminds him, however, of their former mutual affection.

Crudel te, come amante amante deve:
Tai fummo un tempo : hor, se tal' esser neghi,
E di ciò la memoria aneo t'ègreve ;
Come nemice almeno ascolta : e preghi
D'un nemico ta'l hor l'altro riceve.
ibid. Cant. xliii. l. 1.

Ah cruel ! think not now I come to prove
The prayers that lovers might to lovers move !
Such once we were !— But if thou scorn'st the name,
Yet grant the pity foes from foes may claim.
l. 313.

Knowing that her intreaties and her prayers
could not prevail with him to return with
Y 3 her,

her, she begs it as her last suit, that she may at least be permitted to accompany him in order to defend him in battle from the assaults of his enemies, by exposing her own person less dear to her than his safety.

Sarò qual pici vorrai, scudiero ò scudo :
 Non fìo eh'n tua difesa io mi risparmi.
 Per questo sen, per questo collo ignudo
 Pria che giungano à te, passeran l'armi.
 Bruto forse non farà sì crudo,
 Che ti voglia ferrir per non piagarmi :
 Condonando il piacer de la vendetta
 A questa qual si sia, beltà negletta.
 Misera ancor presumo ? ancor mi vanto
 Di schernita beltà, che nulla impetra ?

ibid. st. 49. l. 1.

Let me sustain or be myself thy shield ;
 Still will I guard thee in the dangerous field.
 No hostile hand so savage can be found,
 Through my poor limbs thy dearer life to wound :
 Soft mercy even may sell revenge restrain,
 And these neglected charms some pity gain.
 Ah wretch ! and dare I still of beauty boast,
 My prayers rejected, and my empire lost. l. 356.

Armida finding all her arts baffled, and all her intreaties ineffectual to alter the fixed purpose

purpose of Rinaldo's mind, passes at once in the most natural manner from the soothing supplications of love to the most appropriate invective of hatred, and the most furious declarations of revenge.

Ne te Sofia produsse, e non sei nato
De l'Attio sangue tu : tel'onda insana
Del mar produsse, e'l caucasò gelato,
E le mamme allattar di tigre Hircana.

ibid. st. 56. l. 4.

Boast not Betrod's nor Sophia's blood !
Thou sprang'st relentless from the stormy flood :
Thy infant years th' Hyrcanian tigress fed ;
On frozen Caucasus thy youth was bred ! l. 399.

Having thus given vent to her passion, she adds a little after,

Vattene pur crudel, con quella pace,
Che lasci à me : vattene iniquo homai,
Me tosto ignudo spirito embra seguace,
Indivisibilmente a tergo havrai.
Nova furia co serpi e con la face
Tanto t'agiterò quanto t'amai. ibid. st. 58. l. 1.

Go wretch— Such peace attend thy tortur'd mind
As I, forsaken here, am doom'd to find !

Fly hence! — be gone! — but soon expect to view
My vengeful ghost thy trait'rous flight pursue :
A fury arm'd with snakes and torch I'll prove,
With terrors equal to my former love ! l. 413.

Recovering from the swoon into which the violent agitation of her mind had thrown her, and finding Rinaldo gone, she upbraids her love of him, and confirms herself in the most desperate schemes of vengeance.

Et io pur anco l'amo ? e in questo lido
Invendicata ancor piango, e m'affido ?
Che fa più meco il pianto ? altr' arme, altr' arte
Io non hò dunque ? chi seguirò pur l'empio :
Nè l'abissò per lui riposta parte
Nè il ciel farà per lui sicuro tempio.

ibid. st. 62. l. 7.

And do I love him still ? still here remain,
And unreveng'd in empty words complain ?
What then avail these tears, these female arms !
For other arts are mine and stronger charms.
I will pursue — nor hell th' ingrate shall shield,
Nor heaven shall safety from my fury yield :

l. 451.

Fancying she has him already in her power, she indulges and enjoys her revenge.

Gia'l

Gia'l giungo, e'l prendo, e'l cor gli svello, e sparte

Le membra appendo, à e dispietati essempio.

Maistro è di ferità vùo superarlo

Ne l'arti sue :

ibid. st. 63. l. 5.

Now ! now I seize him ! now his heart I tear,

And scatter round his mangled limbs in air.

He knows each various art of torture well,

In his own arts the traitor I'll excell !

l. 457.

Recollecting her mistake however, and regretting the opportunities she had lost of gratifying her resentment, she immediately subjoins,

Misera Armida, all hor' devevi, e degno

Ben' era, in quele crudel incrudelire

Che tu prigion, l'havesti, hor tardo sdegno,

Tinflamma, e move neghittosa lire.

ibid. st. 63. l. 8.

But ah ! I wander !— O ! untimely boast !

Unblest'd Armida, whither art thou tost ?

Then shouldst thou to thy rage have given the rein,

When he lay captive in thy powerful chain.

l. 461.

These few examples will give some idea of Tasso's talent in the invention of sublime
and

and pathetic sentiments. The strength of his Genius appears equally conspicuous in those vivid, picturesque, and sublime descriptions, which run through almost every part of the *Jerusalem Delivered*.

The Poet presents us with a very picturesque, as well as a truly affecting representation of the appearance of *Clorinda* expiring, after she had received baptism from the hand of *Tancred*,

D'un bel pallore hà il bianco volto asperso,
Come à gigli farian miste viole :
E gli occhi al cielo affisa e in lei convers
Sembra per la pietate il cielo e'l sole :
E la man nuda, e fredda abizando verso
Il Cavaliero in vue di parole,
Gli dà pegno di pace : in questa forma
Passa la bella donna, e par che dorma.

Cant. 12, st. 69. l. 1.

As lovely paleness o'er her features flew ;
As vi'lets mix'd with lilies blend their hue :
Her eyes to heaven the dying virgin rais'd ;
The heavens and sun with kindly pity gaz'd ;
Her clay cold hand, the pledge of lasting peace,
She gave the chief ; her lips their music cease.

So

So life departing left her lovely breast ;
 So seem'd the virgin lull'd to silent rest !

Book 12. l. 524.

In perusing the description of the melodious sounds heard by Rinaldo in the enchanted wood, we feel a kind of rapturous pleasure somewhat similar to that which the hearing of them would have excited ; and the harmony of those sounds is imitated in the musical cadence of the verse.

Passa pui oltre et ode un suono intanto,
 Che dolcissimamente si diffonde.
 Vi sente d'un ruscello il roco pianto :
 E'l sospirar de l'aura infra le fronde :
 E di musico cigno il flebil canto
 E l'usignuol che plora e gli risponde :
 Organi, e cetre, e voci humane in rime.
 Tanti e si fatti suoni un suono esprime.

Cant. 18. st. 18. l. 1.

A dulcet symphony his sense invades
 Of nymphs or dryads warbling through the shades.
 Soft sighs the breeze, soft purls the silver rill,
 The feather'd choir the woods with music fill :
 The tuneful swan in dying notes complains ;
 The mournful nightingale repeats her strains :

Tim-

Timbrels and harps and human voices join;
And in one concert all the sounds combine!

Book 18. l. 119.

When Solyman is preparing to attack the Christians, the Poet by a very sublime figure represents Alecto as sounding the charge, and sets this direful fury before our eyes as spreading forth the ensigns of battle.

A costui viene Aletto e dà lei tolto
E'l sembiante d'un 'huom d'antica etade.
Vota di fangue, empie di crespe il volto,
Lascia barbuto il labro, e'l mento rade:

Cant. 9. st. 81. l. 7.

Alecto sounds the trump; her hand unbinds
The mighty standard to the sportive winds:
Swift march the bands like rapid floods of flame,
And leave behind the tardy wings of fame.

Book 9. l. 101.

This fury is described a little after in a very striking and dreadful attitude, urging onward the work of death.

E la face inalzò di flegetonte
Aletto, e'l segno diede à quei del monte.

ibid. st. 21. l. 7.

Alecto

Alecto shakes on high the infernal brand,
And gives the signal from her lofty stand. l. 167.

We pass over the description of the garden and bower of Armida in the sixteenth book, which the reader must have observed to be rich and luxuriant in the highest degree, and which, though partly copied from the gardens of Alcinous, and the abode of Circe, possesses at the same time a great deal of originality. The description however of the solemn preparations of the magician Isoneno, in order to raise the dæmons to guard the wood in which the Christians felled timber for carrying on the siege, is so striking that we cannot omit adducing it as a remarkable example of the quality we are presently considering. Speaking of the darkest shade of the forest, the Poet tells us,

Hor quì sen venne il mago e l'opportuno
Alto silenzio de la notte scelse :
De la notte, che prossima successe,
E suo cerchio formovvi, e i segni impresse.

E scinto

È scinto e nudo un piè nel cerchio accolto,

Mormorò potentissime parole.

Giro tre voltè à l'oriente il volto,

Tre volte à i regni ove dechina il sole,

E tre scosse la verga ond 'huom sepolto

Trar de la tomba e dargli moto suole :

E tre col piede scalzo il suol percosse :

Poi con terribil gridò il parlar mosse.

Cant. 13. st. 5. l. 5.

Here the magician came ; the hour he chose

when night around her deepest silence throws :

Close to his loins he girt his flowing vest,

Then form'd his circle, and his signs impress'd :

With one foot bare within the magic round

He stood, and mutter'd many a potent sound.

Thrice turning to the coast his face was shewn ;

Thrice to the regions of the setting sun ;

And thrice he shook the wand whose wondrous force

Could from the tomb recall the buried corse :

As oft with naked foot the soil he struck,

Then thus aloud with dreadful accents spoke.

Book 13. l. 33.

Having framed his spells he utters the following awful and horrible incantations, unequalled except by those of a similar nature delivered by the witches in Macbeth.

Udite,

Udite, udite, ò voi che da le stelle
 Precipitar guì e folgori tonanti:
 Si voi, che le tempeste, e le procelle
 Movete, habitator de l'aria erranti;
 Come voi, ch' à l'inique anime felle
 Ministri sete de gli eterni pianti:
 Cittadini d' averno, hor quì v'invoco,
 E te, signor, de' regni empì del foco.
 Prendete in guardia questa selva, e queste
 Piante, che numerate à voi consegno.
 Come ill corpo è de l'alma albergo e veste;
 Così dalcun di voi sia ciascun legno.

ibid. st. 7. l. 1.

Hear you! who once by vengeful lightning driven,
 Fell headlong from the starry plains of heaven!
 Ye powers who guide the storms and wintry war,
 The wand'ring rulers of the middle air!
 And you the ministers of endless woe,
 To sinful spirits in the shades below!
 Inhabitants of hell! your aid I claim,
 And thine dire monarch of the realms of flame!
 Attend my will; these woods in charge receive:
 To you consign'd each fatal plant I leave.
 As human bodies human souls contain,
 So you enshrin'd within these trees remain. l. 45.

The effects of Armida's adjurations and spells,
 while she was yet in the phrenzy of her
 rage,

rage, upon account of the departure of Rinaldo, are described with the utmost vivacity and strength of imagination.

Giunta à gli alberghi suoi chiamò trecento
 Con lingua horrenda deità d' Averno.
 Sempie il ciel d' atre' nubi e in un momento
 Impallidisce il gran planeta eterno :
 E soffia, e scote e gioghi alpestri il vento,
 Euo già sotto e pie muggiar l'inferno.
 Quanto gira il palagio, udresti irati
 Sibili et urli, e fremiti, e latrati.
 Ombra più che di notte in cui di luce
 Raggio misto non è tutto il circonda ;
 Se non se in quanto un lampeggiar riluce
 Per entro la caligine profonda. C. 16. st. 67. l. 1.

Now at her dome she calls with hideous yell
 Three hundred deities from deepest hell :
 Soon murky clouds o'er all the skies are spread ;
 Th' eternal planet hides his sickening head.
 On mountain tops the furious whirlwinds blow,
 Deep rocks the ground, Avernus groans below.
 Through all the palace mingled cries resound,
 Loud hissings, howls and screams are heard around.
 Thick glooms, more black than night the walls inclose,
 Where not a ray its friendly light bestows ;
 Save that by fits sulphureous lightings stream,
 And dart through sullen shades a dreadful gleam !

Book 16. l. 486.

Of

Of the irregular greatness, wildness and enthusiasm of Tasso's imagination the two last quoted passages are pregnant examples, to which we may add as instances of the same kind the astonishing appearances presented to the different warriors who visited the enchanted wood, and the strange journey of Solyman and Ismeno to Jerusalem in an enchanted chariot.

The position laid down and maintained in a preceding part of this work, that original Poetic Genius will always discover itself in allegories, visions, or in the creation of ideal figures of one species or another, is likewise very remarkably exemplified by the surprizing fictions of Tasso, whose visionary scenes and supernatural characters of angels and dæmons, so justly portrayed as well as uniformly supported, are infallible criterions of the the plastic power of his Genius.

S E C T. VIII.

Of the Effects of Genius, on the Temper and Character; and of the Advantages and Disadvantages tending the Possession of it.

HAVING considered at sufficient length the nature and ingredients of Genius, in a preceding work, at the same time that we have pointed out its effects in composition, and in the improvement of arts and sciences; having likewise exemplified the observations that were made in the former work, on the qualities which constitute original Poetic Genius, by quotations from some of the most celebrated Poets of different ages, quotations which we have endeavoured to apply and to illustrate, it will be no improper conclusion of the present work to take a general view of its influence on the temper and character, as well as of the advantages

tages and disadvantages attending the possession of it; by which means we shall be able to discover how far this singular accomplishment renders a man happy in himself, or agreeable to others; and of consequence whether or not, it ought in reason to be an object of desire or envy.

A man of Genius is really a kind of different being from the rest of his species. The bent of his disposition, the complexion of his temper, the general turn of his character, his passions and his pursuits are for the most part very dissimilar from those of the bulk of mankind. Hence partly it happens that his manners appear ridiculous to some, and disagreeable to others; that most people, though they treat him with a ceremonious respect, behave in his presence with an uneasy restraint; and that his company is seldom courted, except by those persons who have penetration enough to discern his merit, as well as candour to acknowledge it, or by those others who hope to derive

some credit to themselves from their acquaintance with him. These consequences indeed, likewise, partly arise from *Envy*, that despicable passion of little minds; but as Genius is not an object of *Envy* to every one, we cannot suppose this passion the sole cause of that indifference and neglect which it meets with from many: we must therefore attribute the mortifications to which it is exposed, in a considerable measure, to those peculiar manners which generally distinguish it, and to its being unfit for entering with any degree of order or relish, into those amusements and occupations which engross the attention of a great part of mankind, promote a kind of social intercourse, and form those bonds of attachment which render men necessary and agreeable to each other. But waving any farther reflections on this subject, we shall proceed to point out the effects of Genius on the temper and character; after which, we shall endeavour to mark the distinguishing peculiarities or foibles.

foibles that are its usual concomitants ; concluding with a short view of the advantages and disadvantages attending the possession of it.

True Genius, we may observe, naturally produces a warmth and sensibility of temper. It is indeed incompatible with a cold, or phlegmatic constitution of mind. All its sensations, and all its affections are ardent, lively and exquisite. Neither its pleasures, nor its pains are of the common kind : there is a delicacy and refinement in its sensibility of either, which is utterly unknown and inconceivable by the vulgar. This extreme sensibility is the effect of a vivacity and strength of fancy, which throws an additional lustre of its own on every object it contemplates with pleasure, as it casts a dark shade on such as are calculated to excite disquietude and pain, by which means the feeling of either is rendered more intensely affecting.

It may likewise be observed, that with this warmth and sensibility of temper, a

certain ardor of imagination, which renders those who are possessed of it peculiarly susceptible of the charms of the fair sex, seems to be naturally enough connected. Though this susceptibility is in one degree or another universal; and though in general the passion of love operates very powerfully in the early period of life, upon the mind of a man of Genius, yet there have been some persons eminently distinguished by this quality, who through an original as well as habitual bent of affection to a different pursuit, have either never felt this passion in an extraordinary degree, or have in a great measure at least subdued the power of it, so as to feel none of its anxiety or uneasiness. Dr. Aikenside, whose Poetic Genius is unquestionable, appears either originally to have possessed this passion in a very moderate degree, or to have attained the entire mastery of it by the force of discipline. Which ever of these was the case we cannot pretend to determine; but he congratulates himself very heartily on being exempted from its painful effects.

Blest

Blest be my fate, I need not pray,
 That love sick dreams be kept away :
 No female charms of fancy born,
 Nor dimpled cheek, nor sparkling eye,
 With me the bands of sleep unite ;
 Or steal my minutes half the saunt'ring morn.

Though we are far from intending to insinuate any thing to the disadvantage of a passion, in itself natural, and when mutual, of all others productive of the most exquisite happiness; and though in many instances, when it is well regulated, it may be proper to encourage it, yet we cannot help thinking that a very great sensibility of the influence of female charms is upon the whole highly unfavourable to the exertions of youthful Genius; since the effect of this sensibility is either to waste the powers of the mind in indolence, or to employ them wholly in fomenting this pleasing, but in the present case highly dangerous passion.

Ambition, on the other hand, derived likewise from a native ardor of imagination respecting only a different object, and found-

ed as it should seem on the same warmth and sensibility of temper, is a passion frequently observed to prevail in the character of a man of Genius, and when properly regulated, and suitably encouraged, is highly favourable to the exertions of this quality, since by holding forth rewards and honours to remunerate those exertions it becomes a perpetual stimulus to the attainment of every excellence which can deserve them.

We may farther remark that Genius has a strong tendency to produce a temper that is sanguine and full of hope; an effect likewise naturally arising from that vivacity and fervour of imagination peculiar to it. This delusive faculty, painting every agreeable object it surveys in the brightest colours, dwelling on them with delight, and placing them directly in the eye of hope, and within its grasp, the temper catches somewhat of the ardor of fancy, becoming eager and sanguine through its habitual as well as natural constitution. Frequent disappointments indeed, as a man of Genius intensely
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feel them, will at last damp the vivacity of his expectations; and he will learn from cruel experience the folly of trusting to those visionary air-built schemes of happiness, which the breath of adversity will instantly dissipate.

At the same time that Genius has a natural tendency to produce a cheerful and sanguine temper of mind, which is its usual attendant, and which, if not saddened by reiterated disappointments, it studiously preserves, it is distinguished by another more remarkable and invariable characteristic, a sublime, soothing, and pensive melancholy. This disposition is indeed the inseparable concomitant of true Genius. Perhaps, it may at first view be imagined, that such a temper of mind is inconsistent with that ardor and cheerfulness which we have above observed to be an usual attendant of Genius; but it is by no means really so. We may observe, that as the minds of the more unfeeling part of mankind, who are
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not susceptible of very high degrees of pain or pleasure, are however at different times in very different dispositions; sometimes pleased with themselves, and with all around them, at other times oppressed with sadness, of which they know not the cause, and experiencing a deplorable vacancy of thought which they are utterly at a loss to supply, so the mind of a man of Genius is subjected to the same kind of vicissitudes, though he feels them more intensely; and while at one time he rises in his enjoyments to a degree of rapture, at another he relapses into a pensive, but pleasing melancholy. This last mentioned disposition, as it is the constant attendant of Genius, so it becomes the predominating feature of the mind, and gives a tincture to the whole character, rendering it rather serious than gay, rather thoughtful than desultory.

That pensive melancholy which so remarkably characterizes exalted Genius, appears to be produced by a sublimity of imagination

gination united with a contemplative turn of mind, both co-operating with a tender and sympathetic sense of human misery. Objects that are in themselves great and awful, as well as dismal and terrific, whether they are the works of nature or of art, are peculiarly calculated to sooth and gratify the disposition of which we are treating. Thus the mouldering towers, the rocking battlements, the roaring billows, the howling wilderness, and the dreary waste, as they are objects awfully grand, at the same time that they are attended with circumstances of calamity and danger, are for these reasons perfectly suited to the indulgence of a sublime melancholy. We may observe that the melancholy which is excited by description, or inspired by meditation, is in general more unmixed and pleasing, though not so affecting as a visible representation of the above mentioned objects to the outward senses. The reason is this. When any mournful scene or event is described to us,

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or is imagined by ourselves, the mind, especially in the latter case, omits the most painful circumstances in its survey, and dwells chiefly on such as excite indeed a tender commiseration (but not a violent commotion) joined with a soothing and delightful melancholy. On the other hand, when these are present to our senses, the emotion becomes too strong to be pleasing. Thus, suppose a person unaccustomed to scenes of horror and death to behold a shipwreck, or the carnage of a battle, the melancholy which these may be supposed to excite would in a great measure be absorbed in a stronger sensation, that of pity in the highest degree; though an after-reflection upon such scenes of distress, when the impression made by them becomes weaker, will naturally inspire a pleasing melancholy, arising from that tender and sympathizing, but not painful sensation of the manifold miseries to which humanity is subjected, and succeeding the former more violent agitation of pity. Such
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appears to be the nature and cause of that sublime melancholy which is so characteristic of elevated Genius. It were easy, by adducing quotations from their works, to shew that the characters of all those distinguished authors, of whose poetical merit we have endeavoured to give some idea in the preceding sections, were strongly marked by the above mentioned quality. Let it suffice to give a single example from the compositions of Ossian, which are tinged with deeper shades of melancholy than those of any other author whatever. He concludes his last mournful song in the following strain of pathetic sentiment, eminently characterized at the same time by that sublime and pensive melancholy which so remarkably predominates in all the poems of this divine bard.

“ Did thy beauty last O Ryno? Stood the strength of Carborn Oscar? Fingal himself passed away; and the halls of his fathers have forgot his steps.—And shalt thou remain,

main, aged bard! when the mighty have failed*."

We may add, that Genius hath a natural tendency to produce a humane, compassionate and devotional temper of mind. These are of all others its most valuable effects. It hath been justly observed by some ingenious moralists, that those affections of the human mind which regard the species in general, and whose influence is the most disinterested, are in fact ultimately derived from those of a more private nature, which respect the individual alone. Hence it is, that from a sense of our own happiness or misery we learn to participate in the happiness or misery of others. A certain fanciful philosopher indeed†, of the present age, hath denied the former to be practicable. Without attempting formally to refute this singular opinion, which, while it gives us a disparaging idea

* Vol. i. Berrathon.

† Rousseau in his *Emilius*.

of human nature, by supposing it governed by maxims of the most confined self-love, is likewise directly repugnant to that precept of Christianity which enjoins us to "rejoice with them that do rejoice, as well as to weep with them that weep," we shall only observe, that though the sensation of pleasure which arises in our minds upon contemplating the prosperity of others is in some cases mixed with envy, and is always weak in comparison of that tender commiseration, that deep felt distress excited by their sufferings (an emotion, which in a person of strong sensibility wrings the heart and draws forth the tear of pity, and of which the reason is too obvious to require to be assigned) yet sentiments of complacency and satisfaction will in general arise in every benevolent heart at the sight of human felicity. Nay, we cannot help thinking it possible, notwithstanding the selfish system of the philosopher above mentioned, that such sentiments may exist in our minds even when

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our own situation is extremely unfortunate: their existence certainly will at any rate be allowed in favour of those who are the objects of our most tender affections, and are allied to us by the ties of consanguinity or friendship. A man of Genius possesses those sentiments of benevolence in an exquisite degree. When he is himself happy he delights to communicate happiness to all around him, scarce enjoying any pleasure of which others do not in one degree or another participate. His own inward satisfaction, greatly heightened by the colouring of a lively fancy, makes him contemplate every object with a placid eye; and the heart expanded and warmed with the prospects of our own and of others happiness presented to it, becomes susceptible of all the finer feelings of humanity.

On the other hand, we sympathize with the miseries of our fellow creatures in proportion to the sense we have of the miseries we ourselves are doomed to experience.

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From this sensibility, sympathy derives its existence; and we have shewn that such sympathy is the inseparable attendant of Genius.

We observed likewise, that Genius has a tendency to produce a devotional temper of mind. This effect too arises from the influence of imagination, which on religious subjects has an unbounded scope. The mind contemplating the Deity as the inexhaustible fountain of being and of blessedness, as happy in himself, and dispensing the stream of happiness to all his creatures according to their various capacities, considering itself also as the object of his bounty and the sharer of his benefits, is irresistably led from admiration to gratitude, and from gratitude to a fervent love of that beneficent Being who is the author of so much felicity to mankind. There is indeed at the same time great danger of being betrayed into error, from the unrestrained indulgence of imagination on religious subjects; for though there can be no such thing as real religion without a cer-

degree of enthusiasm, the effect of imagination, yet this faculty, if left to pursue its own course, without being under any subjection to the controul of reason, will involve the mind in those mysteries of fanaticism which will absorb its powers in speculations beyond its extent, or beyond the verge of common sense.

It may farther be observed, that Genius is frequently connected with a bashful timidity and diffidence. True Genius is indeed very rarely united with those accomplishments which make a man's fortune in the world. It is destitute of that address, confidence, and presumption, which often impose upon the ignorant and superficial part of mankind; at the same time that it is a stranger to the subtle arts of insinuation, which procure the friendship of the weak and vain. Being naturally bashful and diffident, it is frequently restrained by native modesty from declaring its sentiments, and when it does declare them, is always afraid of incurring censure or ridicule. The ingenuous

genuous blush, the down-cast eye, and the faltering tongue, betray its inward confusion and timidity.

Genius is likewise sometimes distinguished by a distant and dignified reserve. Conscious perhaps that it ought to be respected and courted, it is not eager to court the friendship or esteem of others. It disdains to offer to any one the incense of flattery, and scorns to submit to the mean offices of abject servility.

Having considered the influence of Genius on the temper and character, we shall now point out some of the peculiarities or foibles which usually attend it.

Among these we may reckon its powerful bent to project romantic and ideal schemes of future felicity. It is difficult to determine whether this strange disposition, which retains its tendency and much of its strength after many fatal disappointments, is upon the whole desirable or otherwise. It provides indeed in the mean time a delicious repast to the mental appetite, but unthink-

ingly prepares along with it a bitter draught, arising from the anguish of deceived hope. This tendency to contrive visionary schemes, it is obvious, arises from imagination, but from an imagination irregular and unchastised.

Precipitate temerity in judgment and conduct is likewise in some instances annexed to the possession of Genius. A man endued with this quality is sometimes apt to say and to do things which to the rest of mankind appear ridiculous, and are really so. This foible, by no means a necessary effect of the quality above mentioned, proceeds from a volatility of imagination, untamed by the chastening power of the reasoning faculty.

We may farther remark that Genius is sometimes debased by an unbecoming union with *Irresolution* and *Inconstancy* of mind. These qualities, it must be confessed, are none of its constant attendants. They are often the effects of a too pliant temper, discovering

covering a disposition to oblige, devising expedients for reconciling different views and interests, hesitating concerning the means of accomplishing its purposes, making concessions, and repenting of the concessions it has made. Thus they may sometimes be resolved into goodnature; but it is goodnature degenerating into weakness. When these qualities are connected with Genius, they are effects of a volatility of imagination, and a natural imbecillity of the mind.

Abstraction of thought may be considered as another more usual concomitant of Genius. It is commonly very conspicuous in the behaviour of persons distinguished by this quality while they are in company. One can perceive from their fixed and thoughtful looks a certain alienation of mind from the subject of conversation, and a continued employment of the thoughts on one particular object, without attending to any thing else. This peculiarity appears to be the offspring of imagination, united with a contemplative turn of mind, which is generally the

attendant of Genius, and often discovers itself very remarkably both in the Poet and Philosopher, though their minds are differently employed ; that of the former being busied in creating the images of Poetry, that of the latter in devising solutions of the phenomena of nature ; while perhaps the rest of the company, regardless of both, are engaged in learned disputes concerning a case in quadrille, the comparative excellence of hounds and horses, or other subjects of like importance. We need not at all wonder while such topics are discussed that they should both sometimes choose to indulge their own reveries, and leave it to others who are better qualified for it to support the spirit of the conversation.

The last peculiarity of Genius of which we shall take notice, is an ignorance of and indifference to the common affairs of life. These qualities, though not universally connected with Genius, are however its ordinary attendants, and indeed naturally enough
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result from the particular pursuits in which it is engaged. The taste and manner of life of a man of Genius being generally so different from that of the rest of mankind, it is impossible he should enter with any degree of relish into their favourite occupations, or that he should adopt their maxims, and conform to their mode of living, without doing the utmost violence to his own inclinations. Hence being unfit to bear a part in the ordinary business of life, he finds himself obliged to shun the society of the far greater part of his species, while he is at the same time equally shunned by them. To consider one self as in a manner detached from the bulk of mankind, even granting them the least respectable part, and in some measure cut off from all intercourse with them, is doubtless a very melancholy consideration, and the dread of experiencing it should induce every man of Genius to study to acquire those qualifications which, however contemptible they may appear to the

pride of superior understanding, can never be considered as useless, while they become the means of promoting a reciprocation of those offices of civility by which life is rendered more easy and agreeable.

These appear to be the chief peculiarities or foibles which are incident to Genius, foibles which are by no means inseparably connected with it, since many have been exempted from them, and since they are such as every one who possesses any considerable share of caution and prudence may in a great measure avoid. But as Genius is not always distinguished by these qualities, it is frequently betrayed into strange absurdities and extravagances of conduct, which prove an entertainment to some, and impart a malicious pleasure to others, by exposing a character otherwise respectable to the petulant sarcasms of irony and envy.

As the observations which we have made on the influence of Genius on the temper and character of the possessor, as well as the peculiarities and foibles which usually attend

attend it, serve likewise to shew its influence on society, and how far it renders a man agreeable or otherwise to those with whom he converses, we shall now conclude with taking a short view of the principal advantages and disadvantages of this uncommon quality, which will enable us to determine how far it contributes to the happiness or misery of the individual.

Among its advantages we may reckon that tribute of admiration and respect which is justly due to it, and which, though not paid by all, is however readily bestowed by the impartial and discerning part of mankind. Admiration hath ever been the idol of Genius, to which it hath devoted many a toilsome day, and many a watchful night. Its bewitching accents, like the balm of life, have often revived its drooping spirits, and reinvigorated its slackened efforts; and doubtless, however precarious and unsatisfactory an acquisition popular applause may appear to the cool dispassionate philosopher, it must be acknowledged to be a real honour to have
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merited the esteem and commendation of the worthier part of our species, as the attainment of these is certainly an object in itself desirable.

Dulce est digito monstrari, et dicier hic est. HOR.

How pleasing 'tis to hear, th' admiring throng
Pointing exclaim—Lo! there he walks along.

Another agreeable, though less envied, concomitant of Genius is the power of self amusement. While the idle and opulent part of mankind are perpetually shifting their scenes of pleasure, from a desire of lulling their cares in oblivion, rather than from the hope of augmenting their enjoyments, the man of true Genius possessing talents happily turned to contemplation or composition, will find in the exercise of these an effectual resource against that deplorable satiety and lassitude of mind which are the infallible consequences of a life of sensual indulgence. It is one of the signal privileges of Genius, whether in its more serious studies or its lighter pursuits, at all times
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and in all places, to contribute to the entertainment of those who are possessed of it. Its rational and improving exercises, at the same time that they impart a serene satisfaction to the mind, prove a sanctuary from which the noise and folly of mankind are excluded, and become a refuge from the numerous perplexities of human life.

These agreeable attendants of Genius however are counterbalanced by others of an opposite nature. It has its troubles as well as comforts, and it is its misfortune to be as susceptible of pain as of pleasure. The life of a man of Genius, like that of a Christian, is for the most part a state of warfare, and those who are in any considerable degree distinguished by this quality may expect to sustain the assaults of malignity and envy, which have been always directed against illustrious merit, and whose envenomed shafts, wherever they penetrate, never fail to poison the calm current of felicity. But though we should suppose the attempts of the malicious part of mankind to reduce

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an aspiring Genius to their own level, baffled by its manifest and acknowledged superiority, it will, notwithstanding, be exposed to severe mortifications in the world, from the neglects of some, and the ignorance of others. A man of superior abilities, conscious as he is of those abilities, will very naturally, and may no doubt justly, claim a certain degree of respect upon account of these ; but he will not find every one with whom he converses entirely disposed to admit his claim ; while in other instances he will perceive with the keen vexation of disappointed hope, that his fame is not so universal as he fondly imagined. Nor is this all. He will not only discover, from painful experience, that there are many other qualifications of greater account with the bulk of mankind than the most exalted Genius ; but will have the mortification to see that respect to which it is entitled, arrogated by those who have no quality to recommend them but their impudence, and with shameful prostitution, as well as abject adulation, conferred on those
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whose title is wholly founded on hereditary or unmerited opulence. Nay farther: if his fortune is narrow, or his situation dependent, he will upon some occasions be exposed to a familiarity of treatment, which from persons of very inferior abilities, and very dissimilar tempers and modes of life, is peculiarly disgusting to an ingenious mind; upon others he will be subjected to the licentiousness of rudeness, or the insults of brutality, and it will be sometimes his fate,

To bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's *contumely*,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That *patient merit* of the *unworthy* takes,

to which he submits with contemptuous, though silent disdain.

We may add, that it hath been often the lot of Genius to be without a protector, and without a patron; that it hath been often left to languish in the cell of obscurity, and to feel the rigours of adversity and want, while it hath been heard complaining of its melancholy situation in the anguish of a
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broken heart, but hath complained in vain.

From this view of the pains and pleasures attendant on Genius few impartial persons will be apt to envy the possession of this singular accomplishment. Indeed when we coolly consider the uncertainty of that fame to which it aspires, the disappointments to which it is exposed in the pursuit of it, and the miseries it is often doomed to experience, it may well be questioned whether a man of plain sense and pliant temper, who thinks and acts like the rest of mankind, who can relish the ordinary pleasures at the same time that he participates in the common cares of life and whose desires as well as pursuits run in the same uniform channel with those of his companions around him, enjoys not at least more satisfaction and contentment than the greatest Genius that ever existed upon earth.

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